

Gamers' Republic



• SHENMUE: PART 2

OUR CONTINUING IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF YU SUZUKI'S BENCHMARK RPG!

• POWERSTONE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN BEHIND THE DREAMCAST FIGHTING SENSATION!

• SILENT HILL

KONAMI'S CHILLING TALE REVIEWED INSIDE!

SMASH BROS.

A BRAWL OF CLASSIC PROPORTIONS!

T'AI FU, SEGA RALLY 2, GUARDIAN CRUSADE, VIGILANTE B, HYBRID HEAVEN, BLOODY ROAR 2, MARIO PARTY, EHRGEIZ

POWER STONE



CROC 2



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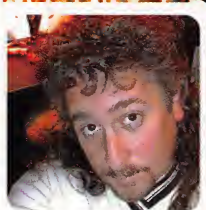


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I can't recall how many times I've wondered why game companies don't place their bankable characters (if they have them) in a wider variety of games. For instance, since the early years of *Street Fighter* many an editor and myself have often pondered how awesome a *Street Fighter* RPG or action/platform game would be. One can easily think of any number of great scenarios, but until recently, only SNK, with *Samurai Spirits* RPG, have really made a go at such a cross-migration on the console front.

So when the Nintendo contingent here at GR got an eyeful of Hal's *Smash Bros.*, in which the most legendary Nintendo characters of all time (save Kid Icarus) duke it out among corresponding classic backdrops, well, we got pretty excited. Enough so to put it in the cover

(with permission, of course) before an official release date is announced for the U.S. We're pretty confident that you'll be seeing *Smash Bros.* joining Nintendo's already promising '99 lineup along side games like *Donkey Kong 64*, *Perfect Dark*, *Jet Force Gemini*, *Mario RPG*, and *Conker's* (long awaited) *Quest*.

On the Dreamcast front, beginning on page 26 you'll find the second installment of our *Shenmue* series, along with our first installment of *Power Stone*, both of which will continue in the months ahead. Of course, next month's issue will contain our first look at the latest reason to hug your PlayStation (again), *Final Fantasy VIII*. It's already shaping up to be a banner year!

DAVE HALVERSON

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MADE IN THE USA WESTLAKE VILLAGE, CALIFORNIA

Peace, love, and respect goes out to the dearly departed. Alphabetically:
 Ang: Enjoy the relaxation, going from the mother of 20 to the mother of one!
 Hair: You can't run from the truth: Queke 3's coming, and you're going down!
 Hoegy: It's not the same without the ambient gay Polish aborigine electronics...
 Rau: We can still hear the faint sounds coming from your office: "casualty...casualty..."
 Rees: I can't find where to plug my dial shock pad into the PC...how am I supposed to play games?
 Ryan: Get back to work! Enough loafing! Enjoy yourself, Mr. Man! Wao hoo!

THE GR STAFF





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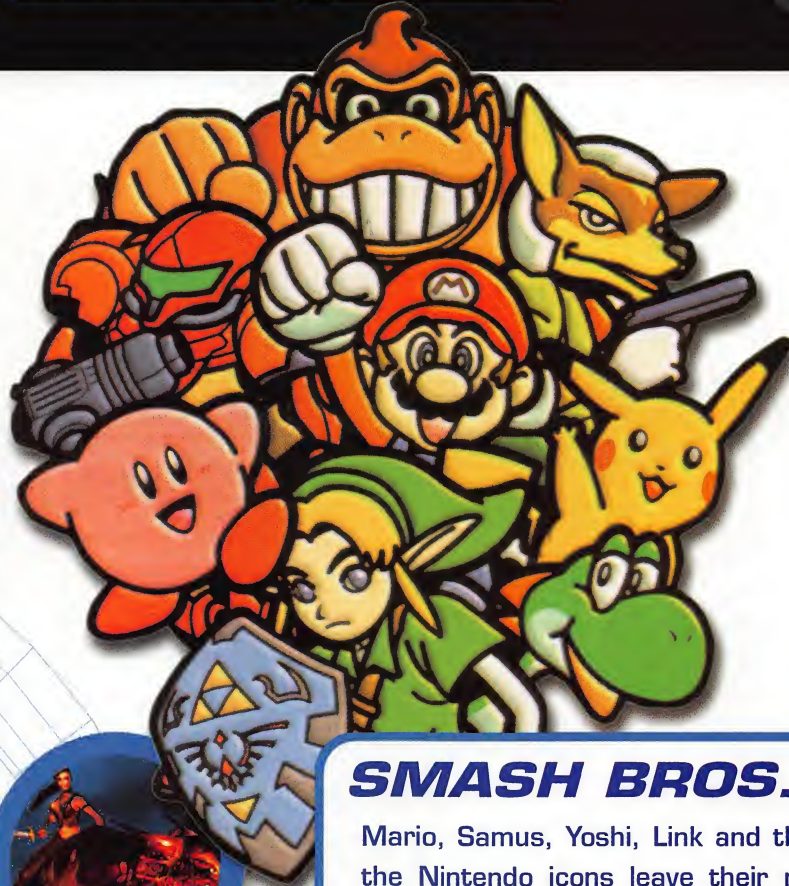
POWER STONE .42**SHENMUE**
PART TWO**.26**

The idea of *Shenmue* is intriguing: go anywhere in a fully realized city, do anything, speak to everyone. Last month we scratched the surface of Sega's most ambitious project to date. Now find out even more of what the mind behind *Virtua Fighter*, Yu Suzuki, has in store for Dreamcast gamers.



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SMASH BROS. .20

Mario, Samus, Yoshi, Link and the rest of the Nintendo icons leave their respective confines and jump into the fighting arena for a no-holds barred battle for supremacy. A collection of such indelible gaming figures in a wild four-player game assures nothing less than what you would expect from an original Nintendo game: absolute fun.

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When All The Trouble Is All Your Fault,



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frontlines

PULSE PULL BACK THE COVERS...

On February 1st at the Hotel New Otani in central Tokyo, Pulse Interactive held a special press conference...



...to announce their first Dreamcast game, *Under Cover*. As Sega were co-hosting this event, the luxurious press room was packed with journalists from most of the major Japanese computer magazines, as well as many other people from the industry. All were eager to hear what the first big Dreamcast announcement of 1999 would be.

In particular, this game has been the subject of much debate since a mysterious advert was placed in several Japanese computer magazines towards the end of last year. Some believed that it was possibly Sega's first light-gun game, but we now know that it is a detective action adventure using a shooting-style game engine, similar in some ways to either *Metal Gear Solid* or *Bio Hazard*.

Present at the conference (seated from left to right in the photo) were: Mr. Masayasu Ishikawa (President of Pulse Interactive Ltd., and producer), Mr. Takashi Yoneda (director of *Under Cover*; previous titles include the *Wonder Project J* series), Mr. Arimasa Osawa (Script and Story), Gomi (music) and Mr. Sadahiko Hirose (Vice President of Sega). Not actually present but shown on video were Mr. Kenichi Kutsugi (character designer) and Mr. Mark Giambruno (movie director from Mondo Media).

One by one they introduced themselves and talked about their role in the production of the game while various video clips were shown to illustrate examples from the game itself. The movie scenes were very well done and were obviously all but complete; however, the game scenes looked very basic and it appears that they still have lots of work left to do in this area.

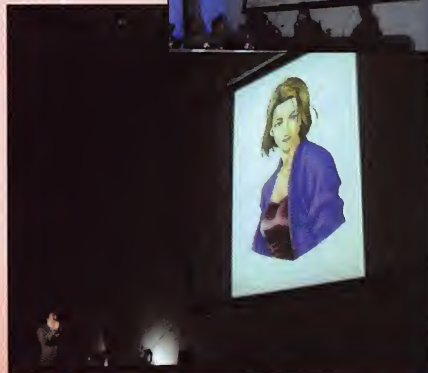
After the presentation of the game had finished, they then fielded questions from the press about the game. Uncharacteristically, there were a lot of questions and the allocated 15 minutes ran over by about 30 minutes. Although some journalists seemed skeptical that the game would be as big as everyone thought, Mr. Ishikawa was very confident and hoped that they would sell as many copies of the game as there were Dreamcasts.



The mysterious advert in question...



Mr. Ishikawa, Mr. Yoneda, Mr. Osawa, Gomi, and Mr. Hirose smile for the attentive press and flashing cameras.



...AND GR EXPOSES THE NAKED TRUTH!

Under Cover is a 3D-polygon action adventure based on a story by Mr. Osawa, a very famous and respected novelist in Japan...

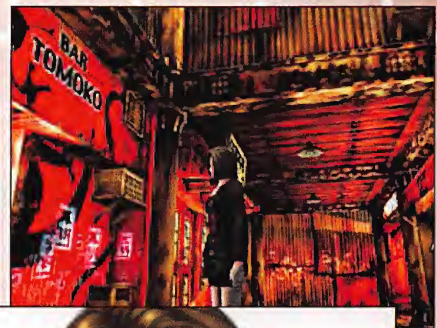
The setting is Tokyo in the year 2025 and the heroine is a female detective named Kei Samejima who is accompanied by a robot cat.

The game is divided into three main stages entitled City Hotel, Bay Area and Water Town, and within each, numerous events take place. City Hotel, the easiest stage, has a modern city setting, while the Bay Area has more of a nostalgic '70s feeling. In Water Town, the most dangerous stage, the center of attention is a large casino ship. Each area has been carefully designed so that it has its own distinct atmosphere.

The game has been created so that it plays like a novel with the story unfolding as you play through the various events. In brief, you must investigate a crime involving the Chinese Mafia by searching for clues and solving mysteries. In the pursuit of the bad guys, you must use your gun to shoot the enemy characters who try to stop you. However, unlike previous shooting games, it isn't always necessary to kill the opposition, as simply firing above their head is sometimes enough to scare them into putting their weapons down and surrendering.

Your character has a wide range of movements and is capable of all the basic actions, such as walking, running and crouching down, as well as a few more advanced techniques, such as a forward role which is useful for dashing from object to object to avoid being hit. In addition, your character is able to employ a wide variety of items.

With its scheduled summer release not too far away, we'll be sure to have more on *Under Cover* soon.



PUT SOME COLOR IN YOUR POCKET

SNK have announced that they will release their high-performance portable game machine, the **Neo Geo Pocket Color**...



From top to bottom: *King of Fighters*, *Fatal Fury*, and *Samurai Spirits 2*, coming soon to the small screen!

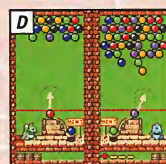
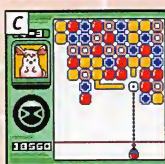
...on March 19th, 1999. The color version is almost identical to the monochrome version except that it is capable of displaying 146 colors simultaneously from a

palette of 4,096 colors. With this announcement, SNK have at last decided to do battle with Nintendo in the portable color game machine market, while it is likely that Bandai's WonderSwan will take over the monochrome market. Fifteen software titles – such as *The King of Fighters* and various other sports and simulation games – will be released simultaneously along with the hardware. In addition, other popular titles from Atari, Capcom, Sega and Taito are also scheduled for subsequent release, as well as other big name SNK titles

such as *Samurai Spirits 2* and *Fatal Fury*. Before release, SNK will hold a special 'Play It' Campaign from January 23 to March 14 in approximately 70 stores throughout Japan, centering around Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe.



Other games on their way: *Tennis 2* (A), *Baseball Stars* (B), *Connect Pon* (C), and *Puzzle Bobble* (D).



NG BASIC SPECS



Neo Geo Pocket Color

16-bit CPU

LCD: Custom reflective color TFT, 160 x 152-dot, Size: 45 mm x 48 mm

SYSTEM SOFTWARE: World clock, calendar, horoscope, alarm, built-in simulated color compatible function

MEMORY back-up function storage (lithium battery included)

POWER SUPPLY: Two AAA batteries or AC adapter

CONTINUOUS OPERATION TIME: Approx. 40 hours (with alkaline dry-cell batteries)

DIMENSIONS: 130 x 80 x 30.5 mm (WxHxD)

WEIGHT: 145g (195g with batteries)

BODY COLORS: 6 types

EXTERNAL TERMINALS

COMMUNICATION JACK: 5-pin connector for communication

SOUND: Stereo Earphone jack

Power AC adapter jack

DIMENSIONS 54 x 46 x 7.5 mm (W x H x D)

WEIGHT Approx. 20g

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HIT THE ROAD, YU!

Although last month we reported on the amazing *Shenmue* Show held...

...in Yokohama on December 20th, Sega were kept busy throughout January as they decided to take the show across Japan to five other cities as well. We paid a visit to the biggest of these, in Osaka, to find out if there was anything new to be seen.

Because Yu Suzuki is still very busy working on *Shenmue*, he was unable to attend the other shows, so the main content of the show was pretty much the same as the Yokohama show except that rather than watching it live, you watched a recording of it instead. To make up for this, Yukawa Senmu appeared live on stage for a special performance. In addition, they also showed a compilation of all his

TV commercials and some lucky people were able to exchange business cards with him after the show. During the main showing, they introduced two new characters not shown at the Yokohama show, and they had special video messages from the various voice actors as well. Goods were in big demand again, but not on sale at the Yokohama show was the official Yukawa Senmu calendar (¥2,000) which had him dressed up as all sorts of strange characters like a ballerina! Overall, the *Shenmue* road show was a great success with over 30,000 people in total attending all the various show locations. This was a great start for *Shenmue* and we expect to see more special events during the spring as well.



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frontlines

PIKACHU & FRIENDS ON ICE? IT'S SNOW JOKE!

Every year in early February there is a world-famous snow festival held in Sapporo, Hokkaido where they display giant statues...



...and dioramas made from snow and ice. This year was the 50th anniversary, so we sent our man to the distant north to suffer the freezing blizzards in search of news. The interesting thing about the festival is that it is a good indication of which characters are popular in Japan, as most statues tend to be based on the current big names. As such, it was no surprise to see that computer game characters were also everywhere to be found. Not only did we locate Mario, Chocobo and Bomberman snow statues, but we also located a giant two-meter high Pikachu carved from solid ice. However, the most amazing site was a giant Pocket Monsters diorama featuring several Pokemon, which was as big as a house and even had a slide for the young children. Unfortunately, there was no snow statue of Yukawa Senmu or a Dreamcast, but we noticed that Nintendo was sponsoring one of the exhibits.



AOU SHOW PREVIEW



It was only a few months ago that we had the AM Show, and now it's already time for the next big arcade show. The AOU Expo will be held on February 17th to 19th at the Makuhari Messe and will be the premiere event for all the major arcade game companies to unveil their games for 1999.

We've already seen a provisional list of companies attending and games on show, so we can tell you now that it's going to be very big. In particular there will be an extensive lineup of Naomi games, including a few surprises as well.

Here's a list of some of the games announced for the show so far, but we expect that there will be a few secret games yet to be unveiled.

- SEGA:** Crazy Taxi, Zombie Revenge, Ring Out 4X4
- CAPCOM:** Giga Wing, Street Fighter III 3rd Strike, Power Stone
- SNK:** Fatal Fury Wild Ambition, Road Burners
- KONAMI:** Guitar Freaks, Thrill Drive
- TAITO:** Super Puzzle Bobble, Battle Gear
- TECMO:** Dead or Alive 2, Gallop Racer 3
- NAMCO:** GP500, Angler King, Gun Bar!

REAL-TIME RALLY 2? ONLY IN AFRICA!

On January 28th (the day that Sega Rally 2 was released for Dreamcast), at Sega's head office, Sega Enterprises announced...

...that they will form a rally team together with Kodansha, the publisher of numerous magazines and books. They plan to have an entry in the Group N class of rally racing, which features cars closer to stock than Group A.

They decided to name their team Team Young Magazine Sega Rally (after Kodansha's comic magazine) and will try to get a top ranking using the Subaru Impreza WRX type RA Sti Version V. Sega and Kodansha will compete in the 47th Safari Rally (Feb 26-28), which is staged over the savannas of Kenya and Nairobi, and which has become known as one of the most grueling races on the planet. Aside from being a great morale booster, success could earn Sega huge amounts of "free" advertising and a new car for Rally 3.



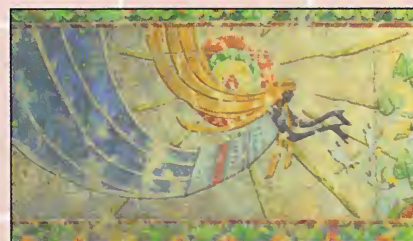
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GRAVE COCOONS TAMAMAYU MONOGATARI

Crave have formed a partnership with Japanese Playstation developer Genki Co. Ltd...

...and plan to bring one of the most anticipated RPGs of the year to the U.S. Now renamed *Jade Cocoon: Story of the Tamamayu*, the story tells of a young boy called Levant and his adventures in becoming a Cocoon

Master. The game's artistic vision has been created by Katsuya Kondoh, who has enjoyed much success with his work featured in many popular anime classics such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Princess Mononoke* (Japan's highest grossing movie ever). The game features exquisite character design and environments and could well set a new standard in story telling and interaction. *Jade Cocoon* will be available sometime this summer.



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THRESH THRASHES GR THREESOME

Thresh (aka Dennis Fong) paid the GR offices a visit last month and, amongst other things, taught us all a good hard lesson...

...in the ways of *Quake II*. He told us of exciting future projects that are to remain top-secret and generally had a good old chin-wag with the Republic crew. Being a top bloke, he didn't brag about his painfully ego-injuring victory in the arenas of *Quake II* against various members of the staff, but as a reward, we gave him a spot to do his own top 10 in the GR Database. Thanks Dennis... ahem...Thresh, and we wish you all the best. Time to get back to the Frag practicing for us lesser mortals... Anyone for muffins?



CONNECTIX CONNECTS PSX LEGAL!

Connectix Corp. have announced that the Federal District Court in San Francisco have rejected SCE's request...

...for a restraining order against the shipment of the *Virtual Game Station*. The VGS is a Mac-based PlayStation emulator package that allows the user to play some PSX games on their Macs. Sony have stated that they believe third-party PSX developers will lose sales to piracy because of the emulator, but Connectix say that they will continue to fight for the Macintosh's right to be able to run more games than previously thought possible. It is indeed a surprise that Connectix have got this far with the legal proceedings, and GR will keep you up to date with any new developments.



SEGA SAT-CAST A GO!

Dreamcast to be made backward compatible with Saturn

GR can exclusively reveal that Sega of Japan are planning to release a GD-ROM that allows the old Saturn's operating system to be dumped into the ample-sized memory of the Dreamcast. The disc, tentatively named "Sat-cast," is to be unveiled at this year's TGS in Japan. Once the Sat-cast has been loaded into memory, you simply place your classic Saturn CD in the Dreamcast and the game boots. The Sat-cast will feature a bunch of pull-down menus allowing the user to alter the emulation clock speed of the virtual Saturn, as well as give the users a chance to utilize a universally compatible debug mode (presumably to allow cheats and level skips to be entered). GR has it on good authority that Sega are proceeding with this as a preemptive strike against Sony's PlayStation 2, which is rumored to be backward compatible with the PSX. A rough price has been estimated at around 3,300 yen (\$29). GR looks forward playing the original *House of the Dead* as it was meant to be played – that is, on a smaller, whiter, more expensive console.

Lightning-fast arcade-style action!

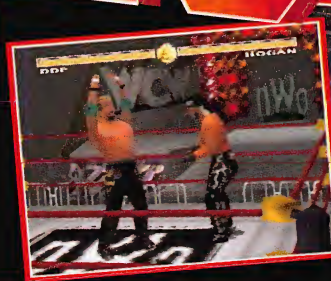
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★ *100+ Page Cloth Hardbound*
Artbook/Instruction Manual!
Including an Exclusive Excerpt
from the Official Hintbook!

★ *Full-color Cloth Map!*



database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS



top ten best selling playstation titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 CRASH BANDICOOT: WARPED SONY | 6 CRASH BANDICOOT 2 SONY |
| 2 TOMB RAIDER 3 EIDOS | 7 MADDEN '99 EA |
| 3 METAL GEAR SOLID KONAMI | 8 A BUG'S LIFE SONY |
| 4 TWISTED METAL 3 989 STUDIOS | 9 RUGRATS THQ |
| 5 NASCAR '99 EA | 10 KNOCKOUT KINGS EA |

The endearing Crash shows no signs of softening his hold on the PS audience. Can Miss Croft take the spotlight next month?



top ten best selling nintendo64 titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT NINTENDO | 6 SUPER MARIO 64 NINTENDO |
| 2 ROGUE SQUADRON LUCASARTS | 7 MARIO KART 64 NINTENDO |
| 3 GOLDENEYE 007 NINTENDO | 8 NFL BLITZ MIDWAY |
| 4 WCW/NWO REVENGE THQ | 9 NASCAR '99 EA |
| 5 TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL ACCLAIM | 10 MADDEN NFL '99 EA |

A remarkable successor to a remarkable surrogate, Zelda will undoubtedly continue its march at the top for months. Perhaps the powers of the Force will see things differently.



top ten best selling saturn titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 NHL '97 EA | 6 SONIC 3D BLAST SEGA |
| 2 MADDEN '97 EA | 7 GRID RUNNER VIRGIN |
| 3 MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH WD | 8 NASCAR '98 EA |
| 4 TOMB RAIDER EIDOS | 9 CROC: LEGEND OF GOBBOS FOX |
| 5 NBA LIVE '98 EA | 10 MADDEN NFL '98 EA |

It looks as if you Saturn owners still aren't finding the right games for the system. Do yourself a favor and ensure that Guardian Heroes and Panzer make the list.

top ten best selling pc titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 DEER HUNTER 2 WIZARDWORKS | 6 FROGGER HASBRO |
| 2 CABELA'S B.G.H. HEADGAMES | 7 COMBAT FLIGHT SIM. MS |
| 3 FLIGHT SIM 98 MS | 8 DEER AVENGER SIERRA |
| 4 HALF-LIFE SIERRA | 9 TOMB RAIDER 3 EIDOS |
| 5 STARCRAFT: BROODWARS BLIZZARD | 10 RUGRATS BRODERBUND |

We've derided Deer Hunter's place on the top ten for several months now, completely lost to its appeal. Apparently these same consumers are captivated by Patch Adams.



top ten overall console

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 1999



- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT-N64 NINTENDO | 6 TOMB RAIDER 3-PS EIDOS |
| 2 ROGUE SQUADRON-N64 LUCASARTS | 7 METAL GEAR SOLID-PS KONAMI |
| 3 CRASH BANDICOOT 3-PS SONY | 8 TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL-N64 ACCLAIM |
| 4 GOLDENEYE 007-N64 NINTENDO | 9 TWISTED METAL 3-PS 989 STUDIOS |
| 5 WCW/NWO-N64 THQ | 10 NASCAR '99-PS EA |

world republic top ten games



japan



- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 SMASH BROS. N64 | 6 CRASH BANDICOOT 3 PS |
| 2 EVOLUTION DC | 7 SIMPLE 1500 SERIES PS |
| 3 YU-GI-OH! GB | 8 STREET FIGHTER ZERO 3 PS |
| 4 TRUE LOVE STORY 2 PS | 9 TALES OF PHANTASIA PS |
| 5 DRAGONQUEST MONSTERS GB | 10 POKEMON CARDS GB |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 18-24, 1999

united kingdom



- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 PREMIER MANAGER '99 PS | 6 GRAND THEFT AUTO PS/PC |
| 2 ROGUE SQUADRON N64 | 7 TOMB RAIDER PS |
| 3 ZELDA: OoT N64 | 8 TOCA TOURING CARS PS/PC |
| 4 FIFA '99 PS/PC | 9 CRASH BANDICOOT 3 PS |
| 5 TOMB RAIDER 3 PS/PC | 10 V-RALLY N64/PS |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE MONTH OF JANUARY 1999

gamers' republic top ten games

BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH FEBRUARY 8, 1999



d. halverson



- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 2 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 3 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 4 TAI-FU | PS |
| 5 GANBARE GOEMON 2 | N64 |
| 6 BLOODY ROAR 2 | PS |
| 7 ERETZVAJU | PS |
| 8 CASTLEVANIA 64 | N64 |
| 9 BEETLE ADVENTURE | N64 |
| 10 BURNT RICE | INTERNAL |



b. williams



- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| 1 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 2 MARIO PARTY | N64 |
| 3 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 4 BALDUR'S GATE | PC |
| 5 ZELDA DX | GBC |
| 6 BLAST DOZER | N64 |
| 7 DRAKAN | PC |
| 8 SF ZERO 3 | PS |
| 9 MICKEY'S TETRIS | N64 |
| 10 CABBAGE WATER | BOFF |



b. siechter



- | | |
|-------------------|---------|
| 1 SILENT HILL | PS |
| 2 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 3 SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 4 S.F. ZERO 3 | PS |
| 5 SUPER METROID | SNES |
| 6 MARIO PARTY | N64 |
| 7 RESIDENT EVIL | PS |
| 8 MICKEY'S TETRIS | N64 |
| 9 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 10 TOFU | SOYBEAN |



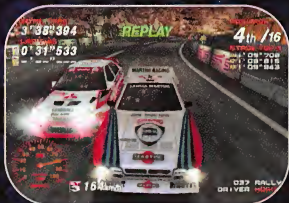
e. sear



- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| 1 HALF-LIFE | PC |
| 2 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 3 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 4 SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 5 SPYRO THE DRAGON | PS |
| 6 GRAND THEFT AUTO | PS |
| 7 ZELDA: OoT | N64 |
| 8 MARIO PARTY | N64 |
| 9 METAL GEAR SOLID | PS |
| 10 HUNGRY MAN | SWANSON |



m. hobbs



- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| 1 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 2 EVOLUTION | DC |
| 3 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 4 SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 5 MARIO PARTY | N64 |
| 6 INTERNAL SECTION | PS |
| 7 ERETZVAJU | PS |
| 8 RADIANT SILVERGUN | SS |
| 9 BLOODY ROAR 2 | PS |
| 10 OCTOPUS LIPS | BOURBON |



-SPECIAL GUEST- thresh



- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| 1 QUAKE III | PC |
| 2 QUAKE | PC |
| 3 STARCRAFT | PC |
| 4 HALF-LIFE | PC |
| 5 DOOM 2 | PC |
| 6 QUAKE 2 | PC |
| 7 WARCRAFT 2 | PC |
| 8 HERETIC 2 | PC |
| 9 MARIO KART | SNES |
| 10 MUFFINS | HOSTESS |



e. pratte



- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 1 STARSEIGE: TRIBES | PC |
| 2 QUAKE 2 | PC |
| 3 QUAKE | PC |
| 4 UNREAL | PC |
| 5 VAMPIRE SAVIOR | SATURN |
| 6 PLASMA SWORD | ARCADE |
| 7 MAME 32 | PC |
| 8 HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 | ARCADE |
| 9 S.F. EX 2 | ARCADE |
| 10 NAREZUSHI | JAPAN |



m. griffin



- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 2 SEGA RALLY 2 | DC |
| 3 EVOLUTION | DC |
| 4 DRAKAN | PC |
| 5 SMASH BROS. | N64 |
| 6 THRILL KILL | PS |
| 7 CARMAGEDDON 2 | PC |
| 8 MARIO PARTY | N64 |
| 9 GUARDIAN HEROES | SS |
| 10 EGG NOG | SEASONAL |

"IS THAT FMV?"

KEEPING UP WITH ADVANCES IN REAL-TIME RENDERING... ►►

Often when new hardware is released, you find yourself looking at footage of a game and wondering to yourself whether or not it's really possible that it's being done in real time. I found myself in just such a situation while watching a videotape of the *Shenmue* unveiling in December, constantly thinking that it looked too good to be real time, and then catching minor glitches or shortcomings that convinced me it actually was. While there is still no danger of confusing really good full motion video for something being done in real time, particularly good real-time graphics will often push the bounds of what was thought possible, so this month we bring you a brief overview of the little graphical glitches that can tell you that you are indeed seeing real-time footage.

As real-time technology advances, it has become practical to model more and more accurate curved surfaces, and there is no real reason why curved surface rendering won't be practical in real time in the next few years. With the current hardware, however, this is not

video, which has so far been completely consistent, is that when doing full motion video, it is fairly simple to do shadows that actually look right; that is, they don't break up, and shadows can be cast on other objects and not just the ground. It is a matter of adding a few lines of code to a ray tracer to have it handle shadows (even from multiple light sources) correctly, and while this slows down rendering substantially, it isn't computational enough to be prohibitive for use in FMV (one caveat is that accurate soft shadows from wide light sources are a whole different story, and significantly subtler to do accurately). So far, no system has proven capable of having objects cast shadows on one another. Dreamcast boasts of the ability to use modifier volumes to achieve this effect, but the initial batch of games has not actually implemented this, and we will probably have to wait for real second-generation Dreamcast games to see whether or not it is practical. In short, if the shadows break up or mysteriously "go under" objects lying on the ground, you're seeing a limitation of real-time rendering.

Finally, there are a number of texture-mapping-related problems that one tends to see in real-time rendering that is not a problem in

itations. Although *Shenmue*, for the most part, has striking texture detail and variation, some blur was visible in the (admittedly early) footage, on the hillside around the Kowloon Walled City, and when the camera was panning very close to the ground. This is not, of course, a problem for FMV, as it is typically done on very powerful workstations with few storage limitations of any sort. On a similar note, real-time graphics tend to have problems with objects in the distance, particularly where detailed textures are concerned. Objects with wooden textures or anything with a similar pattern will often shimmer annoyingly when they get too far away, and strange curved patterns can appear where they shouldn't (this is the Moire Effect). This was very visible in the *Shenmue* footage in scenes that panned over a village, where the roofs would shimmer a lot, and in scenes with a lot of intricate metal bars, which had similar problems. While some techniques like MIP mapping, anisotropic filtering, and supersampling are starting to become practical possibilities for real-time games



practical, so even on the Dreamcast you can still expect to see the occasional polygon edges showing up, particularly on models of humans. Full motion video, in contrast, often renders with either true curved surfaces, or polygon meshes so fine as to be indistinguishable from smooth curves. This means that complicated curved objects can be modeled very accurately in FMV, and you won't see any of the polygon edges (generally most visible along a figure's silhouette) that are nearly always associated with real-time graphics. If you're seeing polygon edges showing up on objects that are supposed to be round, even if they're very subtle and only in a few spots in the model, it's a good bet you're looking at real-time graphics. One of the differences between real-time rendering and full motion

FMV. There is the familiar problem of pixellation (or blur, when bilinear filtering is used), which tends to arise mainly due to storage lim-



(*Sonic* used MIP mapping to keep distant objects looking rather good), the common and extensive use of supersampling in full motion video reduces these problems dramatically, making FMV look much smoother and more stable than nearly all real-time graphics.

As you can tell, there are a number of telltale signs that can indicate that you are indeed seeing real-time footage (unless someone is going out of their way to produce poor FMV). While these issues may no longer be a problem a few years from now, for the moment at least it should give some idea of where the biggest qualitative gaps lie between real-time and prerendered graphics, and help you convince yourself that whatever the latest footage you're seeing is actually being done in real time.

KONAMI XXL SPORTS SERIES™



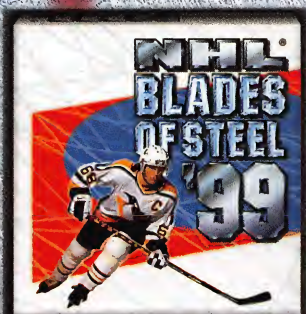
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Choose your strategies. Motion-capture graphics. So real you can feel the ice.



www.konami.com

if
you
were
me

Could you stand up to the
pressure of being
named team captain?

stick handle, wearing a
225 lb. defenseman on your
back like a sweater?

stop blowing kisses
to the **pretty** girls
in the arena?

it's not so easy, **is it?**

JAROMIR JAGR
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GAME BOY COLOR



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SMASH BROS.

BY BRYN WILLIAMS

There is a wide selection of weapons and power-ups that randomly appear throughout the rounds in Smash Bros. Favored by Donkey Kong is the patented Light-Sword (not at all related to another similar device from a place far, far, away). Other items include the MegaTomato (from the Kirby series), Princess Zelda's heart pieces and Pokéballs straight from Team Rocket's supply cupboards!





The most unlikely bunch of beat-em-up stars ever get ready for a Big Brawl!

prised of a superb selection of characters, exceptional animation, stylized graphics and novel gameplay. The story behind the game is somewhat bizarre but may well give credence to why all these cutesy characters want to maim each other. The scene is set in a child's bedroom where a single white glove (known as Master Hand) springs to life. Master Hand breathes life into a collection of Nintendo beanies that are strewn around the kid's room and then forces them to engage in deadly combat to determine which will remain on top of the dresser, and which will be banished to a cold, dark closet.

Initially there are eight controllable characters (with four remaining hidden) comprised of Mario, Donkey Kong, Kirby, Yoshi, Pikachu, Link, Samus Aran and Fox McCloud. All of them have at some time or another featured heavily in Nintendo's success, and for some, this is their first 64-bit incarnation. The idea of the single-player game is to progress through ten levels (excluding three bonus stages) and battle the other characters in order to reach the grand finale against Master Hand.

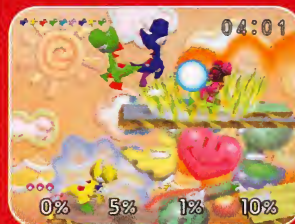
Each character has a large number of moves, some being ranged missile attacks and others being more powerful close-combat techniques. The whole key to *Smash Bros.* is to stay inside an arena while taking as little damage as possible, but at the same time hitting the other guy out of the ring. There are no rounds or energy bars, but instead a damage meter rises until the physical act of getting your guy back into the mix is more and more difficult. When heavily damaged, enemy's attacks are much more effective, and you will find yourself being shot out of the match like a well-aimed nuclear missile. To prevent this, you must employ your special moves, shields, and double jumps to keep you at ground level while attempting to beat up the other players. Thankfully, the game controls allow for accurate maneuvering around the stages, and once again,

the N64's analog controller proves to be the best.

Everything moves along at breakneck speed, but the real fun starts when you plug three other friends into the game. The multi-player aspect of the N64 seems to be very much in demand these days, and harking back to the good old days of *Bomberman* on the Super Famicom, it's really plain to see why. *Smash Bros.* plays best as a multi-player title, but unlike *Mario Party* (which cannot be enjoyed to the same level with one player), the single-player mode is equally addicting. It is still unknown as of yet when this game will be coming to the U.S., but Nintendo of America must realize the potential of *Smash Bros.* Keep your fingers crossed (maybe E3 will be the right time and place), and just for your reference, *Dai-Rantou* roughly translates as "The Big Brawl." Now that definitely makes sense.

When the average person thinks of Nintendo, mental images of Mario's platforming adventures or Link's dungeon explorations usually come to mind. Very few of us ever thought we would see the day when these brave, genteel characters would be dropped into a surreal location and instructed to kick seven shades of crap out of each other. Well, that day has finally arrived in the slightly weird shape of *All-Star Dai-Rantou Smash Brothers*. Cooked up and spat out by Nintendo's long-time affiliates, HAL, *Smash Bros.* looks set to redefine the N64's attitude on a global scale.

Already at number one in Japan, *Smash Bros.* can best be described as a multiplayer fighting game, com-



Mario

The world's favorite plumber headlines the frantic brawling as only he can. Armed with an array of deadly kicks, punches and crushing combos, Mario is the obvious choice for newbies and pros alike. Watch out for his Red Fireball ranged attacks and his Drill Kick, because if ignored, you'll find yourself rocketing out of the arena extremely quickly.

Donkey Kong

The tie-wearing ape is more than capable enough of over-powering all but one of the All-Star crew (that being Ness) with his gargantuan strength and close-up moves. Performing deadly Spinning Clotheslines, unsettling Ground Slaps and insane grabs/throws, Uncle Kong is a force to be reckoned with. Watch out for Giant Donkey Kong. He's one bad mother lover.

Link

Hyrule's legendary hero makes a most welcome addition to the character lineup, and certainly proves to be popular with Zelda fans. Armed with the trusty Master Sword, he uses all his signature moves, such as Sword Spinners, Bomb Tossing and Boomerang Mayhem, to conquer the opposition. Beware challengers, because Gannon's nemesis can break you in half.

Samus Aran

Nintendo's finest female starlet makes her first 64-bit debut with style. Again, signature moves are the order of the day for the young lass, as she morphs into the Robotic Ball and lays superior mines. Charge up her Laser Cannon and cause all kinds of pain for your opponents. Samus has one of the best aerial assault attacks, so don't let her get beneath you. Unless of course you want to lose the match.

Captain Falcon

Hailing from Port Town, this dark figure has no past. Not much is known about this F-Zero champion, other than the fact that he is the greatest pilot in the galaxy. In the arena, his Falcon Barge and Falcon Kick moves may be slow to execute, but they cause severe headaches to those on the receiving end. Excellent jumping range and reach are the key to Falcon's success in Smash Bros.

Luigi

Skinnyer and taller than his rotund brother, Luigi specializes in double-jump attacks, ferocious Uppercuts and dashing Fist Flurry maneuvers. The third secret character in the game once again makes the Mario Bros. tag-team battles practically unstoppable.



SMASH BROS.



Yoshi

Mario's faithful green companion puts his tongue-related skills into full effect in the combat arena. Yoshi has the longest reach and jumping capabilities of all the characters in the game. Turn people into large eggs by passing them through your lower intestines, and then use your prehensile tongue to lash and throw them far away. Yoshi is basically a green wolf in sheep's clothing and makes cutesy little noises, but beware, because he won't think twice about chapping your hide.

Kirby

HAL's pink amorphous blob is the most diverse player in the game, mainly due to the fact that he has the power to inhale other characters and gain some of their abilities. Original moves include a Killer Slam throw that destroys energy bars, as well as a custom double jump enabling long aerial movement. Keep your distance because once Kirby's repertoire has been mastered, he is a formidable opponent, albeit one looking like a spoonful of pink jello.

Fox McCloud

The leader of Team Star Fox is one fox that doesn't need to worry about Bloodhounds and upper-class buffoons chasing him through fields. This guy will turn around and incinerate you with his patented Anti-Andross Laser as soon as look at you. Fitted with a Space Marine Jet Pack, Fox can propel himself around and charbroil you at the same time. He has superb juggling-combo abilities, so don't jump directly at him. You'll be sucking your food through a straw if you do.

Pikachu

Flash Mouse is go! The little yellow peril is not only the most popular Pocket Monster (Pokémon) in existence, but he's also one of the best contenders in Smash Bros. His superior speed and agility make him extremely hard to hit and easy to control. Pika-Flash moves will destroy injured participants, and Electro-Bolts will keep them at bay long enough to inflict serious damage. Pikachu is, for all intents and purposes, a hardcore little mouse.

Purin

Known in the West as Jigglypuff, this particular Pocket Monster is the strangest of all the contestants. Featuring bizarre moves, tough bonus stages, and even one semi-useless Sleepy-Time move, Purin is the hardest character to master. This is attributed to her slow movement, and relatively weak attacks. She possesses the power to daze opponents with a strange melody, enabling her to use her best attack (the Elvis-Coif Grab 'n' Toss) to eject them from the play area.

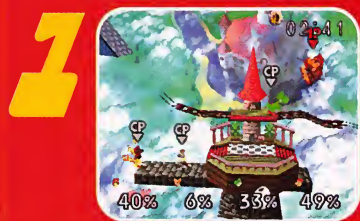
Ness

Totally rad, dude! Onett resident Ness originally starred in Mother 2 (Earthbound) but his yo-yo skills are being put to the test by Master Hand in the All-Star lineup. Hitting a home run with his baseball bat is no problem for Ness, as long as the ball is someone else's head! Ness can fling PK Thunder Bolts and PK Fire Balls around as well as bopping craniums with his yo-yo. Ness is probably the most powerful all-rounder in the game, so unlock him ASAP.





STAGE 1 – IN THE SKY OF CASTLE PEACH
Way above the lands of Mushroom Kingdom, the All-Stars get to battle it out on two precarious platforms, one of which slowly moves from left to right. Cunningly positioned above is a bumper that can propel you to your doom. Be careful where you jump.



STAGE 2 – CONGO JUNGLE
Home of Giant Donkey Kong, the Congo Jungle features two vertically rotating platforms and a fairly wide gantry for rumble-based activities. If you find yourself falling out of the play area, try to land in the DK barrel that lurks at the bottom of the screen. In true DK tradition, you'll be able to save your skin by shooting yourself back into the fray.



STAGE 3 – CASTLE OF HYRULE
Princess Zelda's rooftop is a dangerous place to be, especially as the weather frequently causes small tornadoes to appear. Avoid these at all costs, but at the same time, try and knock opponents into them and watch them fly away. Three small platforms gain you access to a lofty advantage, but beware of assaults from below.



STAGE 4 – PLANET ZEBES

The alien planet makes an appearance from those heady Metroid days, but still boasts the same volcanic instabilities that made it such a treacherous place all those years ago. Deadly lava rises suddenly, so make sure to maneuver your way to the very top platform when the level begins to react to seismic activity. One moving platform allows retrieval of vital power-ups.



STAGE 5 – YOSHI'S ISLAND

Plucked straight out of the 64-bit version of Yoshi's homeland comes a relatively small arena for the ominous carnage. Luckily there are three cloud formations that will save your skin if you are quick enough to utilize them before they vaporize. When four players go at it on this stage, the pace of the game will make your ears bleed.



STAGE 6 – PUPUPU LAND

At first sight, Kirby's stage looks innocent enough. Three platforms and one large flowery section of terra firma seem to be stable, but watch carefully for the large oak tree. This wooden deity does not take lightly to people scrapping on his turf, and subsequently he will blow winds of insanity across the playing field, causing those slower warriors to be swept to the edge of the board.



STAGE 7 – SECTOR Z:

ABOARD A GREAT FOX
General Pepper and the rest of the crew are sealed in the hull, but you are fighting on top of Star Fox's flagship, the Great Fox. Watch out for Fox's Arwing spacecraft, as remote control allows it to swoop into battle and randomly fire its twin lasers. Note that the Arwing can be boarded, but be careful that you don't get carried away. Literally.



STAGE 8 – YAMABUKI CITY

High atop the SILF Corp. building, a giant Pokéball zeppelin touts a flier that states, "gotta catch 'em all." This can only mean Pocket Monsters are around causing trouble again. Watch for the service-lift entrance. When light glows from the doorway, you can release a random Pocket Monster to wreak havoc on all the contestants. Just don't let yourself be one of the ones that gets fried by Bulbasaur!



SECRET STAGE –

CLASSIC MUSHROOM KINGDOM
8-bit music and graphics announce the hidden multi-player level in Smash Bros. Two pipes contain Piranha Plants, but they also allow quick travel between the ends of the arena. POW blocks can be stomped on to zap other players, and the two pulley platforms in the middle can be used to drop unaware idiots to their doom. Gotta love that funky-ass music.



SMASH BROS.



CURRENT HIGH SCORE



Can you land a lunker? There's no need to exaggerate the size of your skill, with Fisherman's Bait you can prove it! Number One Rated arcade game now on PlayStation® Two player versus mode - fish against a friend. Dual Shock function lets you feel the bass biting

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shenmue

BY WARREN H.

a wealth of information revealing sega's biggest game ever

While the play mechanics of *Shenmue* may draw comparisons to numerous other RPGs, it is the immense scale of Yu Suzuki's project that differentiates it. Games up to now have always limited you to certain events that occur in certain locations at certain times. You knew that every object had a purpose and that you'd need to enter every room to speak to every person, and that everything they said was a vital clue to the plot. *Shenmue*, however, is different; it is FREE (Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment). Sega have created a world so large that it would be almost impossible to go everywhere, do everything and speak to everyone. With over 500 characters, thousands of rooms and a real-time environment, you're not so much playing a game as experiencing a virtual reality. With this freedom of choice, everyone who plays the game will find themselves part of an entirely unique experience – no two games will ever be the same. In order to fully appreciate this unique game system, it's first necessary to understand the game's environment. This month we take a look at the characters, locations, time and weather that form the basis of *Shenmue*, and explore the copious intricacies that are carrying the game to unseen heights. We haven't been this intrigued by a game in quite some time; AM2 are undeniably reaching for a pinnacle of game design.

MOVEMENT

walking across a 3D world with a perfect camera in tow

Movement is very simple and trouble free, allowing you to concentrate on where you want to go instead of how you ought to get there. In addition, the intelligent camera work makes navigating the complex 3D environment very simple, with no need for continued manual adjustment of the viewpoint whenever you change direction.

1.14"

WALKING



1

Pressing UP on the cross key moves you forward, LEFT or RIGHT turns you left or right and DOWN moves you backwards while looking over your shoulder.



RUNNING

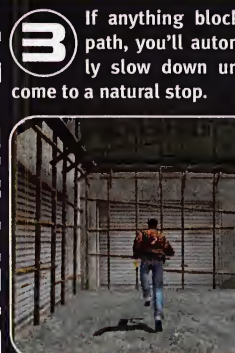


2

Pressing the L or R key makes you run forward. You'll smoothly and automatically slow down as you run around people and turn corners.



STOPPING



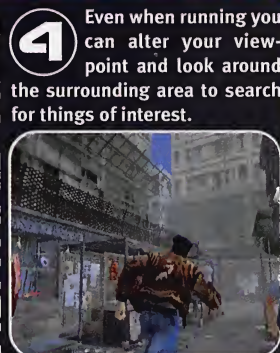
3

If anything blocks your path, you'll automatically slow down until you come to a natural stop.



There won't be the juddering starts and stops in running motion that we associate with 3D adventures. *Shenmue* is striving for reality in every facet.

RUN AND VIEW



4

Even when running you can alter your viewpoint and look around the surrounding area to search for things of interest.



DIAGRAM A
0.00°/360.00°



VIEWING real world environments require perceptive manual inspection

22.5°

Whether standing or moving, you can alter your viewpoint to look around. This is important because you'll need to look for places while exploring the city and searching for items inside rooms. The analog stick gives accu-

rate control, allowing you to look in every direction. This will prove invaluable when searching for the sign of a store or looking around the floor of a room in order to find anything of value that's been dropped.



ABOVE



UP



FAR LEFT



LEFT



AHEAD



RIGHT



FAR RIGHT



DOWN

リール-

| | | | | | | | |
|------|----|----|-------------|------|-----|----|----|
| -1/6 | 06 | 31 | MetaPlus | 0.92 | 3.6 | 31 | 88 |
| -3/4 | 31 | 24 | OptiLimited | 1.31 | 2.6 | 21 | 84 |
| -5/8 | 44 | 32 | Helvetica | 4.95 | 4.9 | 33 | 00 |
| -1/2 | 02 | 04 | Typeout | 0.01 | 1.1 | 00 | 00 |

CONVERSATION forget about generic characters of the past



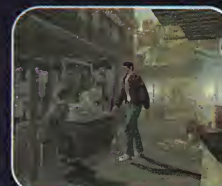
With hundreds of characters, each with their own specially recorded dialogue, it's not surprising that conversation plays a major part in the game. In order to talk, you simply press the A button. You needn't be directly in front of them to start chatting, as most characters will turn around and face you if they're inclined to talk. Occasionally, people will talk to you first without prompting, but you needn't talk to them if you choose not to. People respond to your questions naturally and in context to where and when you meet them; they don't simply repeat the same old lines. Sometimes they will answer with a gesture instead of speaking by, say, shaking their heads or pointing with their hands.



Your character bends down to talk to the small child.



The old man stops what he's doing and turns to face you.



A stall owner tries to sell you something as you approach him.

TALKING each person is prepared to react in an incredibly realistic manner



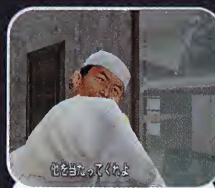
Not everyone will want to talk to you. This shopkeeper is too busy with his work. All speech is in Japanese, but the text subtitles (optional) will naturally be different for each country. The choice to subtitle seems to be the only rational course, considering the incredible time required to record voice.



"Excuse me"



"Sorry"



"Ask someone else"

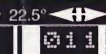


"I see"



EVENTS

When creating the perfect world, normal social activity is integral

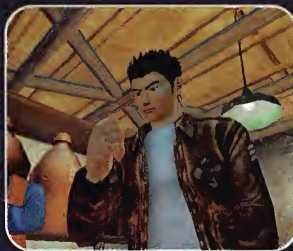
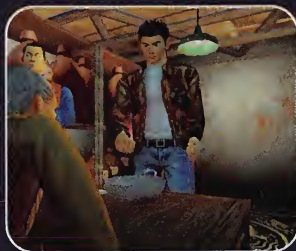
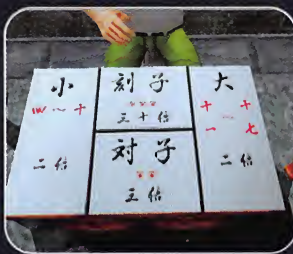
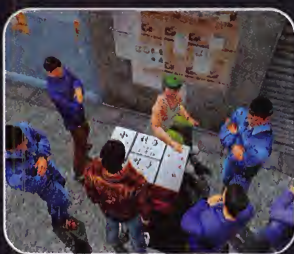


Anything in *Shenmue* that doesn't involve moving, viewing or talking is handled with a variety of events. The controls are completely different for each event (there seems to be no limit to what you can do), so here are a few examples showing the scope of possible activities in *Shenmue*.

1

The easiest way to make money is by gambling. There are several different kinds of gambling, and each game has its own risks and rewards. The rules for playing are explained to you before you part

with your money, and you have plenty of choices in how to make your bets. Both of these games involve rolling two or three dice and betting on the outcome, while the other street gamblers watch your every move.

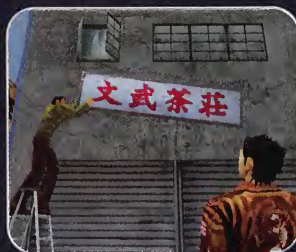
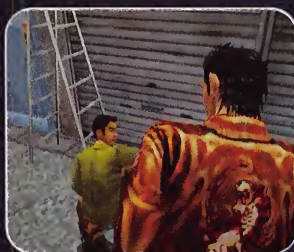


GAMBLING

2

Some of the events can be considered mini-games in their own right, as they have no direct relation to your adventure – but they sure are fun to play. In this particular case you are asked by a store

keeper to help him put his shop sign up straight. As he stands holding the sign, you can say "higher" or "lower" until it's level. After he secures the sign, he stands next to you to see how it looks.



MINI GAME

3

The safest way to make money is to work, and there are plenty of part-time jobs to be found. The more difficult the job is, the more money you can earn – but if you perform your work badly, your money will be cut. Here you are at the port, being asked to help move some large crates.



PART-TIME JOBS



4

Using items also becomes a special event. Here you must listen to various tapes to see what's been recorded. This scene in particular was given special attention to detail to make it as realistic as possible.

The hand that you see was completely motion-captured by Yu Suzuki's *Shenmue* crew. Each delicate item interaction, whether picking up the tapes in a highly realistic manner (as opposed to the floaty contact in most games) or pressing each of the recorder's buttons, truly involves unimaginable 3D representation and effect.



USING VARIOUS ITEMS

QUICK TIME EVENTS

movie-quality drama and mind-boggling camera angles

QTEs can be considered a special type of action-orientated event that requires you to press certain buttons quickly and in sequence in order to navigate a number of obstacles successfully. Because the control system is so simple, it allows for some incredible action scenes that could never be done without complete control over your character.

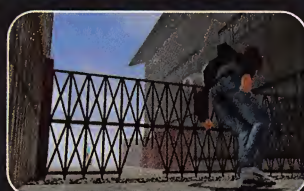
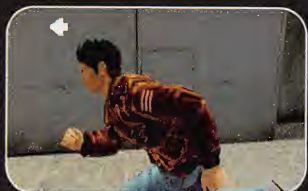
The button you need to press next is flashed up on the screen for a moment, and you need accurate timing to press the correct sequence before it disappears. The button sequences appear to be random, although the arrow keys Up, Down, Left and Right seem to be used when

you need to move in a certain direction, while the four buttons A, B, X and Y are used for other miscellaneous actions.

The number of times you can make a mistake before you fail is different for each QTE, and failure doesn't mean that you've botched the whole game. Whether you succeed or fail simply changes your course through the game.

Lasting as long as a minute, the examples we show below involve numerous complex actions; however, there are much shorter and simpler QTEs as well. Everything depends on where you are and why you're there.

1 Here you are running after a child through the port-side area. Most of your actions involve jumping over objects in your way or moving from side to side to avoid crashing into things.



Failure means you are flattened by some huge pipes.

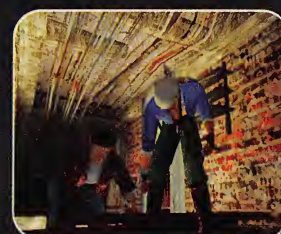
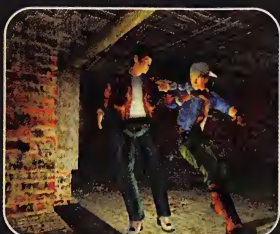
Success! You jump back and avoid the pipes.

You trip up after failing to jump over some metal boxes.

The Left and Right buttons are used to test your balance here.

2 In this scene, you are chasing Ren Wuying in a building that is under construction. More than simply navigating the building, you must also constantly dodge Ren's attempts to slow you down. Very imaginative scenarios abound.

3 You have been hand-cuffed to Ren Wuying, and you are both trying to escape from members of a violent rival street gang. If you fail to press the correct direction button in time, you can't go around the corners properly. During this scene, Ren actually tells you whether he wants to go left or right before the button appears, so be prepared to panic and react in the heat of the moment.

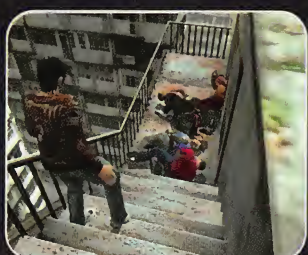
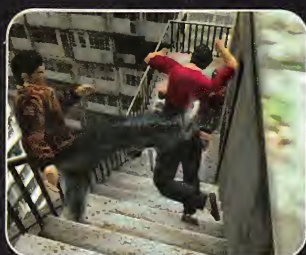


QUICK-TIME BATTLES*

insanely complex martial arts battles go beyond well-animated

The fight sequences in *Shenmue* are simply a special kind of QTE, with the same basic control method; however, your character can use a very wide range of martial arts techniques, and the battle scenes all look like some-

thing out of a top-notch Jackie Chan flick. No matter how intense the shots look, there's no comprehending the sheer speed and grace of these encounters, with their incredible, unmatched choreography and stunning angles.



Another large group of thugs attempts to attack you on this steep alleyway staircase.



As you can see, the puzzle elements in C2 are alive and well as is the robust engine. If Argonaut can tweak their lil' gator's control quirks, C2's potential is monstrous.



*Croc's on a quest to find his parents in Argonaut's stellar sequel...
Dante has risen and he just ordered a pair of alligator shoes!*

CROC 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON



The way I see it, there are generally two kinds of sequels: mere extensions, rushed out (usually in a year or less) to capitalize on a hot commodity, or great concepts that fell a little short, being realized by perfecting a second effort, no matter how long it takes. Once in awhile, with *Crash Bandicoot* or *Tomb Raider*, for instance, the first scenario works because the original is so tuned that fans happily embrace a sequel which offers more of the same (along with some added nuances). But in the case of *Croc*—a great looking game with a great character and concept—it fell short of critical acclaim due to certain control issues and repetitious elements. Not having fully realized its potential of critter de jour (although it still sold a ton of copies), Argonaut are now crafting the ultimate *Croc* sequel with a quiver of new enhancements that will ensure that this time around, the game will feature a level of diversity worthy of its pristine graphic prowess and cuddly little gator.





Argonaut's top Croc... It's gator in every way!

For starters, on this outing Croc finally leaves Gobbo Island. Discovering that his parents are looking for him, he heads to the mainland, which opens the game up to more species (friend and foe) and four villages (each containing ten levels), where Croc can speak with and get help from the Gobbos, buying items like jelly jumps and extra lives. To deal with the resurrected Dante and his tribes, Argonaut have equipped Croc with a new high-tail attack, power flip, a hanging kick, and a boost power jump, which compliment his original arsenal. He'll need them, too, because the new bosses promise to be bigger and tougher than ever. Still more added fun for the whole family, *Croc 2* has some thrilling themed levels like hang gliding, rafting, kart racing, and snowball rolling... snowball rolling? Technically, any PS game hoping to stick out in '99 is going to have to kick tail – and Croc's ready for that too, with higher polygon count, single-skinned models, even better animation, and something the original definitely lacked: a large diversity of textures and color schemes. It's all Dual Shock compatible and coming your way this spring. **f**





The tale of a valiant warrior and her dragon mount... Action and adventure across a massive 3D world

Despite Psygnosis' recent fall from grace, they are still the masters of hyping new games. Among their upcoming PC lineup, no title is being pushed as strongly as *Drakan*. As the game approaches Beta stage, it's clear that it could offer a heaping load of fantasy-themed gameplay and well-supported 3D play mechanics. At the very least, developers Surreal have conjured up a provocative storyline and two very likeable main characters. This intricate fantasy universe is indicative of a dedicated team.

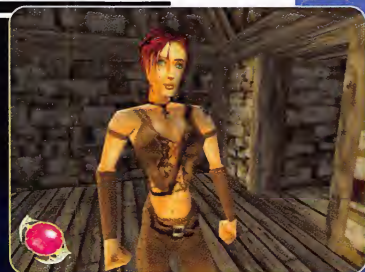
The version of *Drakan* I'm playing right now is an 80 percent complete Alpha game. That doesn't mean it's 20 percent away from being a finished product, it just means that it's very close to going Beta. As a result, I'm experiencing only a fraction of

what *Drakan* is poised to offer. Before the gameplay can even begin, however, the vivid storyline easily captured my interest. The vast world of *Drakan* is held within an enchanted state of existence where dragonkind and humanoids live together in unrestrained harmony. The creatures learned to co-exist over the course of several civilized eons by developing a system of self-discipline, self-mastery, and unconditionally shared respect. This theory was especially embraced by the more evolved beings of *Drakan*, and it eventually became the prevailing moral code and basis for the Order of the Flame.

Sadly, as with most blissful denouements, the road to peace was paved with adversity, tragedy, and war. In the early years of truly intelligent life, each race revealed its darkest, most sinister quali-

DRAKAN

BY MIKE GRIFFIN





A synergy of third-person action and role playing... The story of dragon and human allegiance

ties. Creatures enslaved their closest genetic competition, bloodthirst was seemingly impossible to satiate, and soon disorder reigned supreme. Amid the unrestrained and desperate chaotic turmoil, a comparatively small band of Boar-Witches began to sweep across the broken land, conquering the disorganized creatures foolish enough to oppose them and all innocents in their path. Their malevolence was without limit, and their intense attack crushed the ignorant warring humans and dragons indiscriminantly. A powerful mage and his dragon mount rose from the ashes to finally end the tide of death brought upon the land by the Boar-Witches.

In the present day, evil has returned to Drakan. As the sexy young Rynn, you discover your brother was kidnapped during a siege by the Dark Union. Using the indomitable combination of steel and the fire breath of your trusted dragon mount, Arokh, you must search vast, wide-open and detailed 3D lands. Supported by a strong engine, the thrill of riding a dragon is intense while the land-based adventure with Rynn comes alive with combat, loads of cool sub-quests, and dozens of well-developed NPC characters (both good and evil). *Drakan* offers a superb mix of intense action, a deep everchanging storyline, and a massive seamless landscape to explore.

Drakan has the potential to be a deep, involving title. There is a huge quest to tackle here, fully developed action, an excellent fantasy theme and story, and strong visuals and sound. There's also a dragonrider multiplayer mode for eight players! We'll have to see how this melting pot of design comes together. ☞



(Top) Rynn accepts her first side quest: raiding a spider cave. (Left) Three Boar foot soldiers attempt to embed their battleaxes in Rynn's cranium. Run away!

Since I've had time to play *Ehrgeiz* extensively since reviewing the import version, I've reached a solid conclusion: This game is an incredibly refreshing alternative to typical 3D fighters. With "typical" I'm referring to *Tekken 3* and *VF3*, their trademark fighting styles, and the form and flow of their one-on-one play-mechanics. *Ehrgeiz* offers a totally unique free-roaming fighting experience complete with an entirely different feel, and yet it doesn't stray so far from the accepted formula as to alienate *Tekken* and *VF* players. In addition, *Ehrgeiz* has one of the best fighting game option and play-mode packages ever, incredible CG, and scads of replay value.

Ehrgeiz's story begins 50 years in the past, when a strange material is unearthed among the ruins of an ancient German castle. The unknown compound is quickly fashioned into a weapon and dubbed "Ehrgeiz." The organizers of a massive fighting tournament award the weapon to the winner, the world's greatest fighter. Eventually the weapon becomes such an important symbol of the tournament that organizers and fans name the event after the weapon. Unfortunately, the weapon soon garners the attention of sinister factions from the Middle East. This secret group uncovers ruins that they assume might provide immortality, but once they reach the final door, a key is required to pass. This key, they believe, might be held within the Ehrgeiz weapon. They send their best warriors to the tournament to acquire the ancient weapon, and perhaps finally solve the mystery of the ruins. Meanwhile, the other participants, mostly honorable fighters looking to test themselves, wait anxiously for the proceedings to begin.

Ehrgeiz's defining characteristic is its free-roaming gameplay and unique point system. Characters execute complex throws, counters, and high and low attack



Check out the subtle shading detail and exceptionally solid environments. Dream Factory are 3D fighting artists as well as innovators.



*Super-smooth 60 fps visuals and superb animation...
The team that brought you Total is back in style!*

EHERGEIZ

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

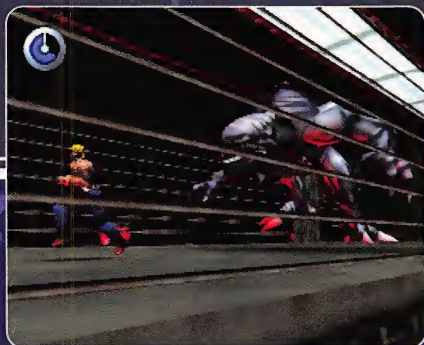
FINAL FANTASY CHARACTERS!



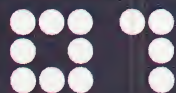
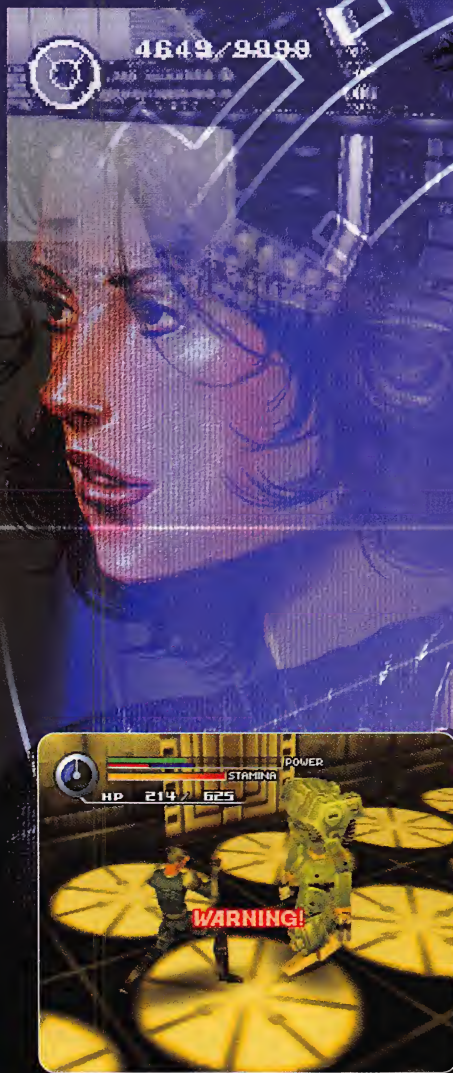
It's all about the Final Fantasy characters! Who would have thought we'd play them in a fighting game? Here you can see Sephiroth slashing with the powerful Masamune Blade. Tifa, Cloud, and Yuffie join him, as well as Django and a resurrected Vincent, who are pursuing each other.



*Winding underneath the streets of New York,
a strange world of genetically engineered humans and aliens coexist...*



One of the more exciting levels in the game has you fleeing a towering mutant (far left) by navigating a maze of narrow passages and catwalks. When it's time to relax, the story continues to unfold (left).





HYBRID HEAVEN

BY BRADY FIECHTER

*Stumbling upon secrets beyond his comprehension,
Diaz must risk everything to uncover the truth...*

Here's a question to stir your nostalgia: What video game series do you consider to be a quintessential part of the 8-bit and 16-bit years? *Contra*? *Castlevania*? *Metal Gear*? I know I'll never forget the first time I played all three of these remarkable games, and I'm going to guess many of you foster the same feelings. With both *Metal Gear* and *Castlevania* representing glorious 32-bit experiences, at least two of these Konami trademarks have continued to carry a reputation of excellence. But how about something new from one of the most respected names in video game development?

Welcome to *Hybrid Heaven*, a promising science-fiction-toned adventure that is indeed new in a number of interesting ways. The game is being labeled a "3D Cinematic RPG," which is actually a rather fitting description for this unique title. Set on the eve of the new millennium, the game opens with the lead character, Diaz, being detained after a mysterious shooting in a subway in New York. Two dubious individuals dressed in all-black garb lead Diaz to an underground fortress, where he escapes to find a sterile world populated by what appear to be genetically engineered beings.

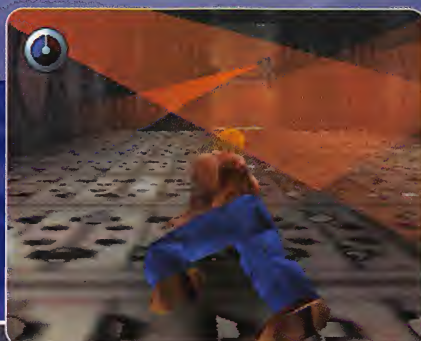
Although the game has yet to be translated from its Japanese roots, the story of *Hybrid Heaven* will undoubtedly be paramount to the game's effect. As Diaz explores this strange world and stumbles upon certain revelations, copious interaction is staged with an array of humans and alien-like creatures, who continue the story arc with an enormous amount of text. Each sequence is designed for cinematic effect, and has the brevity that is desired in a game with heavy RPG elements. Despite the current Japanese text, the visual style in which the cinematics play out is already mysteriously appealing, feeding the desire to uncover the many secrets that appear to be swirling in this unusual world.

Spanning 11 main areas divided into numerous subsections, the massive levels boast clean, expansive designs, which create a feeling of existing inside a futuristic space station.

Armed with an extremely basic set of phaser-like weapons, you are required to clear the area of obstacles such as security droids and energy fields in order to locate passwords that access further sections of the labyrinthine structures.

Nearly every room entered in *Hybrid Heaven* contains an enemy, which include a huge assortment of humans, mechanical beings and unusual, biologically altered creatures (the laughable, genetically wronged cow needs to go). Highly original and convincingly animated, the battles are waged in sequences of preset hand-to-hand combat moves. When an enemy is confronted within a certain distance, a battle screen pops up, listing a set of commands. While combat is temporarily suspended, the player must choose from a vast array of punch and kick routines, which are learned as experience points are accrued. As a power meter increases, the enemy must be avoided in the real-time 3D arena, and if the enemy is deft enough to move in, a set of defense commands will be activated. The combat is a cross between martial arts and professional wrestling, requiring unique strategies of grappling with an opponent and learning to find vulnerable spots with which to key in on. There is complete control over the combat, but once a move has been inputted, control, as in most turn-based RPGs, is taken away from the player.

It would seem that the protagonist in *Hybrid Heaven* is some sort of enhanced being, so when he is victorious in battle, the experience leads to individual body parts leveling up. Depending on the player's style of combat, the character will lean more heavily to certain techniques, thereby altering his overall balance. As original as this fighting system is, it cannot carry the game on its own: it will be up to the heavy story elements to make or break *Hybrid Heaven*. ❄



ハイブリッドヘブン



One of the best multiplayer PC gaming experiences gets squeezed onto an N64 cart. Can Nintendo's console do justice to the quintessential FPS?

After working his magic on the original *Quake* conversion for N64, Aaron Seeler and his team try their hand at the bigger and more complex *Quake II*. It was decided early on that rather than doing a rather straight port of the PC version, *QII* on N64 would merely inhabit the same universe, so to speak. Probably done as much because of hardware considerations and differences between the expected play experience of a console game, all the levels in *QII* N64 have been redesigned. You might recognize a room here and there, but everything else has been reconfigured and re-colored. Since this will probably be most N64 gamers first real look at *Quake II*, this should be a fairly moot point.

We were shown an early build of N64 *QII* for about an hour, and I must say it looked quite good. Good-quality textures and an acceptable frame rate were in evidence, and while the Ram Pak didn't boost the resolution, it did enable dynamic lighting effects. Everything just looked more colorful than the PC version, as an effort was made to get away from the ubiquitous brown of id's world. Muzzle flashes have been added to the weapons, and the BFG now throws out green bolts of lightning in its deadly journey. Nearly all of the sound effects from

the PC version were in, and the soundtrack was a very cool ambient affair, sort of along the lines of the N64 *Doom* soundscape.

We had a few goes also with the four-player split screen and some of the new deathmatch levels and multiplayer modes. Notable alterations to Capture the Flag include instant frags when an enemy flag is captured, which elicited a chirp of, "That's cool," from our resident *Quake II* fiend. However, I must say that the frame rate was quite low in four-player mode, though we'll reserve final judgement until we see a complete version of the game.

In any event, N64 junkies should be happy that a version of *Quake II* is on its way. Scheduled to ship this spring, our review is forthcoming. »



QUAKE II

BY MIKE HOBBS



In the above left shot, an impending rail gun frag gives us a chance to look at the colorful lighting routines of the N64 version, evident when using the Ram Pak. Above right, we see the four-player split screen in action.

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V-RALLY

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Let's face it: racing games are purely hit and miss these days. Plug one in and see any one of the following – chunky frame rate, over- or under-sensitive control, or excessive pop-up – and it's over. With plenty to choose from, this has become a tough category, but when word of a good racer spreads, a whole lotta folks run out and buy it. To ensure this will be the case with Infogrames' *V-Rally Edition '99*, they have sought out the advice and guidance of internationally famous world champion rally driver Ari Vatanen. Ari has been involved with every aspect of the game, tweaking it to deliver a realistic rally look and feel. Having sold more than two million copies of *V-Rally* for the PlayStation worldwide, it's no surprise that Infogrames are pulling out all the stops for this N64 game. Expect everything a great racer needs: all 11 official world rally championship vehicles, new cars exclusive to the 64 version—a Citroën and (gulp) Hyundai—and four hidden cars, for a total of 17 racers. Live, variable weather patterns will also figure into the mix as you traverse 50 unique tracks (over eight locations across the world) designed by professional rally course designers. Two-player games can be split horizontally or vertically, and it is, of course, Rumble Pak compatible.

Unfortunately, the game will not make use of the Ram Pak, as it was started sometime ago, before the little red Pak of joy surfaced. Still, these shots (from the 64 development system) look great. Of course, the true test will come when it's time to stick the thing in a box. As soon as we get our hands on a playable version, you'll be the first to know how *VRE '99* fares. ⚡



Infogrames are out to create the quintessential rally game... Short of throwing in the dirt, all systems are go!



THE LONGEST JOURNEY

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: FUNCOM AVAILABLE: 3rd QUARTER '99

OK, it's official: point and click adventures are not on their way out, they're just getting more and more graphically incredible, and *The Longest Journey* proves this. Lavish scenery, wonderfully animated characters and an absorbing and well-thought-out story combine flawlessly to make me think that this could be one of the best yet. A fine selection of puzzles are integrated, which are tough enough to be a challenge, but not so obscure that you find yourself running around and wasting time resorting to desperate efforts in order to advance.

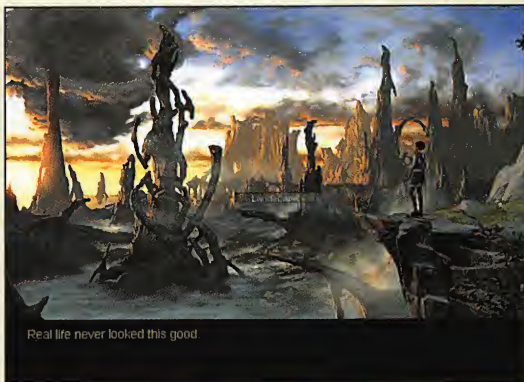
In *The Longest Journey*, you control April, an 18-year-old art student living in a future reality called Stark, a thoroughly modern place where science and order govern the lives of the inhabitants.

When April leaves home to start art school, she discovers she can leave this reality and travel, just like walking through a doorway, to another place called Arcadia, where magic and chaos reign. Through the course of the game, she discovers that not only can she travel between these two realities, but she must find a way to hold the balance between the two, or both worlds will be lost. Thus begins her longest journey – a journey that I'm enjoying immensely thus far.

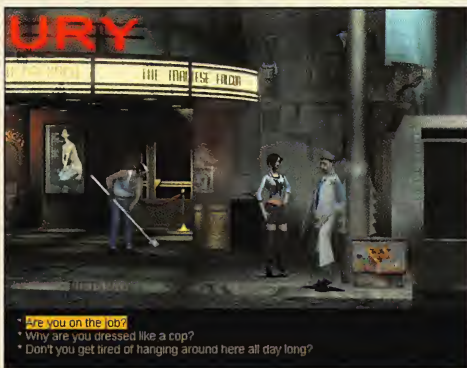
And heck, this was only a demo teaser – the game isn't due until fall '99, and I for one can't wait! ☹



Small chat box:
Gordon: Take a bath and brush your teeth.
Kris: I'm taking a cold shower in this heat.



Real life never looked this good.



*Are you on the job?
*Why are you dressed like a cop?
*Don't you get tired of hanging around here all day long?



POINT BLANK 2

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: NAMCO AVAILABLE: APRIL

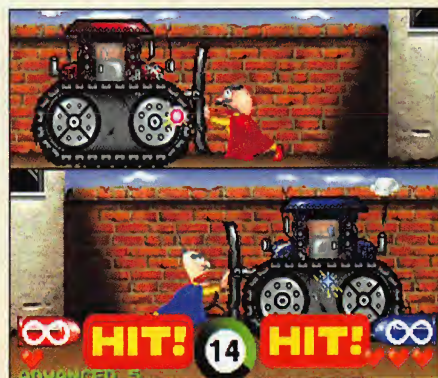
Interestingly enough, this PlayStation sequel to the *Point Blank* arcade game is itself being made into an arcade game. This is not usually the way things happen, but I guess it must say something pretty good for the gameplay. As expected, Dr. Dan and Dr. Don (those lovable eggheads) are back with more firearm-related farces, and this second outing proves to be just as much fun as the first.

PB2 features four different modes of play – Story, Party, Arcade and Training. The Story mode allows one player to engage in a simple adventure much like the one found in the original *PB*. The Arcade mode is where coin-op junkies will settle themselves into hours of target practice. It boasts many different sub-games, ranging from shooting Flossy the Sheep's fleece off her back to zapping alien craft in a special bout of *Galaga '88*. Party mode allows you and your friends to go head to head, competing for top scores, and believe me, it gets pretty ugly sometimes.

Training gives you less talented gamers a chance to become the next presidential assassin by honing your aiming skills to perfection. So at the end of the day, *PB2* delivers a lot more of the same, but that is its best feature. Pluggin' inanimate animals and targets should not be this much fun! ☹



Shoot the area you want to visit. Aim carefully!





AN INTERVIEW WITH TAKESHI TEZUKA CAPCOM R&D DEPT. 1

POWER STONE

CAPCOM'S FIRST DC FIGHTER IS UPON US, USHERING IN A NEW ERA OF INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND FREE-ROAMING FINESSE! WE SAT DOWN WITH CAPCOM R&D DEPT. 1 LEADER TEZUKA-SAN FOR A REVEALING LOOK INTO POWER STONE'S DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY...



GR: DID YOU HIRE ANY NEW STAFF TO CREATE THE POWER STONE DEVELOPMENT TEAM, AND WILL YOU STAY TOGETHER AS A SPECIAL NAOMI TEAM?

TT: There weren't any new people from outside the company. However, the team was a mixture of programmers and designers who had previously worked on both 2D and 3D games. It wasn't the case that they had only worked on one type of game up to now. As for myself and the programmers, we've worked on *X-Men*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Justice School* and *Star Gladiator*, to name a few. This represents our combined experience of creating 2D and 3D. Fundamentally, at Capcom we don't have set teams which stay together all the time.

GR: HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN THE TEAM?

TT: The team has changed size several times during the development of *Power Stone*. At the start there were just the six of us but at the peak there were around 50 people. The designers were about 60 percent and the programmers and game planners about 40 percent. There are a lot of designers, but this ratio is normal for us. However, with *Power Stone*, since it is a 3D game, simply increasing the number of staff isn't very efficient. For a 2D game, when the schedule is hard, we can increase the staff significantly and speed up development since there are lots of character animation patterns to be designed; but it's different for a 3D game which has polygonal models. We couldn't get much help from the rest of the company.



GR: WHAT PERCENTAGE IS THE GAME COMPLETE?

TT: We've practically finished it. It's not fixed yet but it'll definitely be out before the Dreamcast version.

GR: WHEN DID THE POWER STONE PROJECT START?

TT: It's divided into two phases. The first phase began two and half years ago when we began preliminary design, etc., but there was no hardware available that was capable of doing what we wanted to do in the game, so it was put on hold. The second phase began in autumn of last year when Sega told us about the Naomi board. With this hardware we were at last able to start the project for real.

GR: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO CREATE THIS TYPE OF GAME?

TT: When the era of sprite games began to change to polygons with games such as *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken*, the modeling certainly made the game visually 3D, but you still didn't really have any real freedom of movement within a true 3D environment. Over the past few years, the number of people going to the arcade has dropped because they have become bored with this style. We thought it was about time we introduced a brand new style of true 3D fighting. From this basic concept we then went on to create *Power Stone*.

GR: WHAT WERE YOUR IDEAS BEHIND POWER STONE'S IMAGE?

TT: It's kind of similar to the way computer games have gone, but recently Japanese manga has become a little boring. In the old days, even though there used to be occasional contradictions in the plot and the story was sometimes a little strange, it was still very exciting. We wanted to bring that old-style manga feeling back to computer games. With the advances in technology and 3D modeling, games are becoming more and more realistic, but when that happens all the games will start to look the same, so we've decided to go for a kind of manga realism instead.

GR: THE STORY TO POWER STONE IS FASCINATING, BUT WAS IT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SET IT IN SUCH A SPECIFIC ERA?

TT: In order to create a more exciting game, we discussed making the game a kind of adventure. But, in order to have an adventure, we believe that you really need to be hunting after a treasure, or it wouldn't really be an adventure. Nowadays, there aren't any real treasures left in the world, and even if there were, you could hunt for them by satellite, etc. It's just not fun anymore. However, back in the 19th century, it was only just the beginning of the scientific age, and so there were still plenty of superstitious beliefs remaining. It was still an era when people had dreams, and so an adventure had real meaning. It was the time when the world was the most active, with exciting new ideas and full of life. First of all, we set the game within this time frame, and added more modern things, such as planes, to make it more exciting. So the time frame is set to a 19th century fashion, but not a real 19th century world, with several items existing from a previous civilization that collapsed thousands of years before.

GR: WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR CONCEPT FOR HAVING YOUR CHARACTERS COME FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES?

TT: I really like the *Street Fighter* era, but fighting games nowadays tend to lean towards the one-fighting-style-versus-another-fighting-style type, but the differences between styles is only appreciated by fighting maniacs. The average player can't tell the difference. The very first *Street Fighter 2 World Warrior* had the representative best fighter from each country fighting, and I thought that this image was really good. This idea of an American, Englishman, or a Japanese person is much easier to understand. So, first of all we decided to have characters from different places around the world.

GR: HOW DID YOU CHOOSE WHAT TYPES OF CHARACTERS TO HAVE?

TT: There are certain styles in deciding the character which is common to not only our game, but to almost every game. First of all, we have the standard type of characters, both male and female, and then usually one more male standard character. Then we have another character who you

can tell just by looking at him is slow but really strong, and one more who, although not powerful, is very fast and agile. Then, finally, we have a mysterious character whose moves are difficult to predict. Overall, we always have these four basic categories of characters: The standard character who can be played by anyone; a strong character for people who like to fight with just brute force; a fast character for those who like to try lots of different moves, and a strange character that most people wouldn't want to use. Next, at the stage of choosing the countries, we then start to look at all the various kinds of occupations and professions that are typically associated with them. For example, with Japan you would have a ninja or samurai, or for America, a boxer or pro-wrestler. Then we try to match our set of character types to the most suited profession from a given country.

GR: DID YOU ORIGINALLY WANT MORE THAN THE CURRENT EIGHT CHARACTERS IN THE GAME?

TT: No, right from the start we wanted to have just the eight characters. The reason for this is that if you have too many characters, then you start to double up on the various basic types and you can't tell the characters apart. As the series continues and the players become used to the characters, we can add new characters, because at that point they'll be able to appreciate the subtle differences between them.

GR: WHICH CHARACTERS WERE THE MOST DIFFICULT TO DO?

TT: The first character we designed was Edward Falcon. He's a standard-type character, so the other characters' speed and strength are increased or decreased relative to his base level. Only after making sure that his gameplay balance felt good were we able to start the others; however, although we were able to come up with his design fairly quickly, it took us a long time before we were happy with the way he played. The last character we did was a female ninja called Ayame, and she was difficult to decide on, too. Being a female character, everyone had an interest in her and we all had our own opinions on how she should be.



(Top) *Power Stone* may quickly become a franchise title for Capcom, so we'll get to know these eight awesome characters extremely well. (Bottom) The sheer size and complexity of these environments is striking. Arcade and home players will drool!



GR: BEFORE DEVELOPMENT STARTED, WAS THERE A CHARACTER YOU DEFINITELY WANTED TO PUT IN?

TT: Because of the game's adventure image around the world, the one character that was most suited straight from the beginning was the pirate. Just seeing a pirate takes your imagination straight back into the world of treasure and adventure and sets the tone for the whole game. It's difficult to conjure up this image just with the words "19th century."

GR: HOW DID YOUR CHARACTER DESIGNS LEAD TO THE START OF AN ANIMATED POWER STONES SERIES?

TT: When the first character designs were produced, it was said that they looked quite different from the typical Capcom style, and that they were something that could be adapted to anime. We thought this was interesting, so we decided to give it a go, but this time it's different. Usually, after a game is released and becomes popular, then the anime is created for the core gamers, but this time the game hasn't even been released yet. Anyway, we entered into discussion with Studio Pierrot, who we haven't worked with before. They did the Urusei Yatsura anime series. Currently they're creating the character settings and story.

GR: DID THE ANIME HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON THE GAME?

TT: There's a character with a knife called Jack. Now, having a knife already sets him up as having a bit of a bad attitude, so when we originally started writing the character profiles, we considered him as some kind of ghoulish felon who was just collecting the Power Stones for greed. However, anime is orientated more towards a younger audience, so it was thought that we better cut that out and make him a slightly better person. The reason he's collecting the stones now is because he's got a bit of a mother complex and his mother used to wear a jewel a long time ago. So he only fights in order to get the Power Stones, and he's not evil at all.

GR: WILL THE ANIME BE BASED COMPLETELY ON THE GAME?

TT: There must be a large number of people who are bored of seeing the same simple pattern to have the anime totally based on the game. We believe that the anime should be enjoyable by itself and not depend on the game. Above all, this time we're concentrating on creating an anime series that is interesting even if it is different from the game. After that condition is met, we can make sure it still applies to the game's image. Of course, game-based anime does have its own appeal, but no matter how close it is to the game, if it isn't fun to watch, then it's no good. Overall, we tried to avoid making too many demands on Studio Pierrot Co., Ltd. The only thing we are making sure of is that people who are playing *Power Stone* don't see anything in the anime that they feel is out of place in relation to the game.

GR: WOULD A SEQUEL TO POWER STONE BE INFLUENCED BY THIS ANIME?

TT: This time we're really trying to create an anime series that is largely independent from the game, so there will be various different elements and new characters present. Since there's a good chance that people who like the anime series would buy a game based on it, if we were to create a sequel and we left out any of these new characters, it would be a bit of a let down. It'll depend on the reaction we get from people watching the anime. However, even if we don't create a sequel, I think that we

could probably still use the same 3D graphics engine again. This style of fighting game is very good, so we might use it for different games as well.

GR: WAS IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW THE CONTROLS WOULD WORK IN A FULL 3D ENVIRONMENT?

TT: This was often the case. Although the game is in 3D, in the end the game is being displayed in 2D on the monitor, so when you're jumping in the air you can't really tell by moving the lever the exact location of where you're going to jump. Even though the characters have their shadows underneath them, it was still impossible for the player to judge jumps accurately. In order to make it easier to understand where you were jumping, we had to experiment with a variety of camera angles. Another problem was with the different height levels. Despite the fact that the ledge or whatever was fairly low, you still needed to jump to get on it. But if the jump was a bit too big for just climbing the ledge, it slowed down the game rhythm, so we changed it so that anything at waist level could be easily climbed over without needing to jump.

GR: WERE YOU WORRIED THAT PLAYING IN A TRUE 3D ENVIRONMENT WOULD BE TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE PLAYERS?

TT: While we were creating the game, we thought a lot about whether or not the controls would be too hard for the players, and we did a lot of location tests to determine their reactions. Due to their feedback we re-did a lot of things to help the players play. For example, when you are aiming your weapon, it's extremely difficult to hit an opponent that is running. By the time you've fired, he's no longer in the same place. In order to make this easier, we calculate the speed and direction of the enemy to determine his position slightly after you fire and aim the shot automatically so that it impacts on his current position and not his position when you actually fired.

GR: HAVE THE CONTROLS CHANGED MUCH FROM YOUR ORIGINAL INTENTIONS?

TT: Basically, at Capcom things always tend to change a lot. If we have a go at the game and it's no good, then we change it. Up to a certain point, we were still using a guard button in *Power Stone*, but in the end we took it out because it didn't work well within this kind of game. We still have the code for this, so we could put it back in at any time, but using the guard button takes away from the fun of the game.

GR: WITH SO MANY ELEMENTS TO POWER STONE, WAS IT DIFFICULT TO GET THE GAME BALANCE RIGHT?

TT: Yes, it was. For example, if there was no guard in *Street Fighter*, then the game would be pretty boring, as you'd just end up pressing the punch and kick buttons as fast as possible. The main point to the game is to collect the Power Stones, but if you don't, then all you do is fight it out in the same spot. In order to prevent this we had to make collecting them sufficiently worthwhile so that the players would want to collect them. Simply making the players glow and giving them a little extra strength wasn't enough; we had to make them ultra powerful. However, if we make them too strong, then the game turns simply into who can be the first to collect the Power Stones – and whoever does is the winner, as they'll be able to crush their opponent easily. Instead of simply just having the Power Stones make you strong, we made the player who collected them really cool with lots of new special attacks, but still give the other player opportunities to fight back. Balancing all this



(Top) Witness Fokker's all-powerful flaming corkscrew uppercut as it melts through Ryoma's defenses. These are gorgeous transparency effects.

was the hardest point. At first it seems that the transformed opponent is unbeatable, but with accurate timing and quick thinking, it is possible to find places to hide from their attack and it's still possible to attack them as well. Balancing the force of the attacks and the time limit for the effect of the *Power Stones* was the hardest point, but I guess this is where all our experience from the games we've created up to now came in. In the end, we're confident we know what makes a good game fun to play.

GR: IN WHAT ORDER DO THE STAGES APPEAR WHEN YOU PLAY THE GAME?

TT: When you're in one-player mode, the stages appear semi-randomly, although actually there are a number of set patterns. If the stages are always in order, then the poor players will only keep seeing the same first few stages and fight the same old opponents, which is a pity. So we wanted everyone to have a chance to see them all. In two-player, the character who enters afterwards can choose the stage that he wants to fight on, so the new challenger also can have the chance to win. In other games, the stages are just background scenery, but with the fully interactive stages in *Power Stone*, each player will probably have an affinity towards his own personal favorite stages.

GR: DID YOU WANT THE STAGES TO HAVE SUCH A STRONG INFLUENCE ON THE GAMEPLAY RIGHT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING?

TT: It was the same when I was doing *X-Men*. I wanted the interaction with the scenery to be one of main sub-themes to the game. It's very difficult to show the true strength of an attack just from the attack itself. It's only when you show something's reaction to it that you really appreciate its real power. For example, after we'd given the character a special beam attack in *X-Men*, it wouldn't have been half as enjoyable to use if you couldn't destroy parts of the stages with it – I tried to put this in as much as possible. With *Power Stone* it was the same – we created objects to fill the stages and we wanted the players to use them.

GR: WHEN YOU STARTED DEVELOPMENT, WERE YOU CONFIDENT THAT YOU COULD CREATE SUCH LARGE AND ELABORATE STAGES?



TT: It depends on the stage. Some stages have turned out much better than I imagined they would be. In particular, the stages we created towards the end are very good; by that time we had become used to this kind of layout and we could design them quicker. The early stages required a lot of hard thinking, as we had to consider how to display the background scenery so that it looked good, and many other things we had to worry about. The first stages we created were Tong-an, Londo and Dawnvolta, although halfway through development we went back and redesigned parts of them again.

GR: WERE THERE STAGE IDEAS THAT YOU DESIGNED BUT WEREN'T ABLE TO IMPLEMENT IN THE END?

TT: The biggest one was that we wanted to be able to go from one part of a stage to a neighboring part of stage. For example, by smashing through a door you could then go into a new room, or by jumping over the bridge you could go down to a new area. The reason we weren't able to do this in the end was because we didn't have enough polygons to be able to express this, and also the camera work became a little awkward as well. On top of that, the amount of extra textures needed was too much and it seems a waste to put them in places where you usually couldn't see them. If you go to the trouble of creating something, you would want it in the main stage area, wouldn't you?

GR: HOW FAR DID YOU DEVELOP THIS IDEA BEFORE YOU ABANDONED IT?

TT: We finished all the preliminary modeling, but we didn't get to start coding it into the game. If we had gone that far, we would have probably gone all the way and put it in. That's why Jack's stage changed. Originally, it was Edward Falcon's stage. It was supposed to be a riverside park underneath a bridge. We wanted something with a dark image, and we had some bats and a gargoyle statue for the fountain. On Edward's stage, if you punched someone off the bridge, they would go to the same area, only set in daytime with angels and pigeons; but in Jack's stage it would be night with gargoyles and bats. We'd modeled all of this, but we reconsidered and decided to concentrate on the main part of the game instead of adding new feature so we cut it and did a different stage for Jack instead.

GR: SO WAS IT MAINLY A LIMITATION OF THE NAOMI BOARD?



(Top) The big man Gunrock receives a bloody knife slash from the deceptively quick Jack. (Bottom) More punishing attack sequences across hyper-detailed free-roaming 3D environments.



TT: To tell the truth, we weren't able to get the full performance out of the machine this time. When we started, it was our first time on completely new hardware with a 3D style of game that we've never attempted before. We didn't know just how far we could go. If we wanted to implement it now, we could probably do it. There's a very high chance that sometime in the future we'll produce a game with this idea in it.

GR: WHY DID YOU WANT TO INCLUDE TRAPS INTO THE STAGES?

TT: It's only my own personal opinion, but I think that a game that doesn't surprise the player in some way isn't very exciting. I wanted to put an element into the game that would make the players surprised, so that's why I added traps to all the stages. Usually you won't see them, because they're hidden; if you knew where they were, it wouldn't be a surprise. It's also quite difficult to trigger them as well, as your opponent has to be in a certain place and you need to perform a certain action to trigger them. However, if you know that you're standing underneath a trap that prevents you from jumping, you need to think carefully about your position when you're being attacked. Originally I wanted to make the traps much more spectacular, where maybe you were blasted into the air, but it slowed down the tempo of the game, so we made them more simple. In addition, we had to take care not to inflict too much damage. Suddenly taking a big hit from accidentally stumbling onto a trap isn't fair to the player and takes away from the fun of being surprised. In addition, if the traps are too powerful, then they become the focus of the game instead of the Power Stones.

GR: HOW MANY ITEMS ARE THERE IN THE GAME AND WHERE DO THEY APPEAR?

TT: There are seven items in total – the bazooka, iron pipe, weak sword, strong sword, pistol, bomb, and hammer – but we're still increasing them for the Dreamcast version. Each one inflicts a different amount of damage and is used in a different way. The order in which they appear is completely random and isn't related in any way to the stage that you're currently on. However, the positions that the item chests are placed at is fixed for each stage – about three places. Those people who want to use an item should try to memorize these positions so that they can get to the items quickly. There are two reasons why we did this. The first one is pretty obvious: Because of the stages' design, you can't just put the items anywhere. There are a lot of places where putting an item would upset the framework of the stage. The other is that if it were truly random, then whether or not an item appeared close to you would end up to fate; playing a game where you end up winning or losing based on luck is no fun at all. However, if you know the places that the items appear, then using that knowledge to your advantage is part of your skill and is fun to play with. As a general rule, the location point chosen to place the item is usually the one closest to the player losing. The Power Stones are also always placed in easy places for retrieval. It's not something we're trying to keep secret, but the Power Stones are always positioned near the player who is losing so that they don't have to go far to get them. This gives the losing player a fighting chance to turn the tables.

GR: HOW DO ALL THESE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY?

TT: We've given the players a wonderful selection of large and interesting stages to play in, and we want them to use them to the fullest. However, unless we give them a reason to run around, they'll just keep fighting in the same spot. The traps, items and Power Stones all appear in set strategic places within the stage. It's up to the players to position themselves appropriately to make full use of these things.

GR: WERE YOU WORRIED THAT WITH TOO MANY THINGS IN THE GAME, THE PLAYERS WOULD BE OVERWHELMED WITH SO MUCH GOING ON?

TT: I don't think we've got too many things, because they're clearly divided into items, traps and the Power Stones. Each one is quite different from the other: the items you use, the Power Stones you collect and the traps you avoid. The players won't become confused with what each one does. If anything might have been a problem, it might have been that the users weren't sure what was the best thing to do at a given time. That's why we paid special attention to the balance between all the things in the game to make sure that collecting the Power Stones was still the most important goal for the players.

GR: HAVE YOU ONLY BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS KIND OF GAME BECAUSE OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE NAOMI BOARD?

TT: Yes, that's right. I never worked on the Playstation board, so I don't know about that board in detail, but with the Naomi we can use a lot of polygons and a large number of textures, and its processing power is fast enough for us to handle a complex 3D game. When we first heard about the Naomi, we were really skeptical about its performance figures, as Sega had only told us it would be able to handle two million polygons a second. However, most manufacturers tend to exaggerate their hardware's specifications, so, at that time, we suspected that the true spec could be somewhere around a quarter of what Sega told us.

GR: WILL YOU BE ABLE TO USE MORE POLYGONS ON THE NAOMI IN THE FUTURE?

TT: I'm sure we will. I think that at the moment we're only using about 50 percent of the Naomi's full power. The more the libraries improve, the more we can get from the Naomi board.



(Top) Check out Fokker using the pillar to vault into Rouge...awesome! See how an energy ring expands as the pillar is being used? (Bottom) That poor Fokker is about to go for a ride on the giant spikes; Gunrock uses a chunk of wood to plow Ryoma, and Jack pays the price as Ayame's tornado slams down.

**GR: WILL FUTURE NAOMI PROJECTS DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OF THE DREAMCAST?**

TT: The Naomi is a good piece of hardware and we've already got several other Naomi projects underway as we speak. I don't know what would happen if the Dreamcast is not successful, because that's not really down to me to decide, but personally I think the Naomi is a great arcade board and we at Capcom would very much like to keep using it.

GR: ARE YOU USING THE OFFICIAL NAOMI CABINET FOR POWER STONE?

TT: Not this time. In order to get *Power Stone* into as many arcades as possible, we've built a special adapter that allows the Naomi board to be used in any of our own custom cabinets. Whether you use the Naomi custom cabinet or not doesn't have any effect on the hardware's performance. The only difference is that the standard JAMMA format monitor screen is a 16KHz interlaced display, but the Naomi cabinet is 31KHz, so its display resolution is very high – it's as good as a PC monitor. From now on, I'm sure that we'll all start shifting over to this type of monitor in the near future.

GR: DOES THE ARCADE VERSION OF THE GAME SUPPORT THE VMS DEVICE?

TT: No it doesn't. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the Naomi cabinet isn't readily available yet and won't be widespread for quite a while. Secondly, the necessary software libraries needed to be able to transfer data between the Naomi and the Dreamcast weren't available when we started development of *Power Stone*. Finally, there's a legal problem in regard to the disclosure of information, so it's currently illegal to take data out of an arcade. However, I'm sure that Sega are close to overcoming these difficulties soon, and that we'll be able to use the VMS in other games from now on.

GR: HOW WILL THE SMALLER RAM CAPACITY OF THE DREAMCAST AFFECT THE VISUALS COMPARED TO THE NAOMI VERSION?

TT: We had too much program RAM anyway, so even if that's reduced, there shouldn't be any problem at all. With regards to the texture RAM being reduced to half, the Dreamcast has a significant compression capability, with something similar to JPEG, so by using that we'll save a lot of memory. The data is totally uncompressed on the Naomi like a BMP file. Also, all the background music is on the GD-ROM instead of in RAM, which it is on the Naomi, so we'll need less memory anyway. Overall, the port to the Dreamcast went very smoothly. We had to make some minor adjustments to the graphics in order to work with the home television, but in all it was a lot simpler than any other port we've ever done.

GR: WHAT INFLUENCE WILL THE EARLY RELEASE OF THE DREAMCAST VERSION HAVE ON THE ARCADE VERSION?

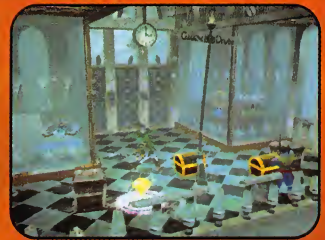
TT: From a positive perspective, the Dreamcast version will stimulate interest in the arcade version. This happened to some extent with *Street Fighter Alpha 3*, so we expect that this could happen for *Power Stone* as well. From a negative viewpoint, it's true that people who have a Dreamcast version are unlikely to play the arcade version. However, although saying that, there still aren't that many Dreamcasts out yet there yet, so whether or not that will be the case we don't really know.

GR: WILL THE DREAMCAST VERSION BE THE SAME AS THE NAOMI?

TT: As far as the gameplay goes, they'll be exactly the same. However, whereas the arcade cabinet has only three buttons, the Dreamcast controller has a lot of buttons, so we're going to make use of them. For example, instead of having to press the Punch and Kick buttons together, you can press the controller's "B" button. We also use the "L" and "R" buttons as well. In addition, you can use either the analog stick or the cross key to move. Another minor change is that for the Naomi version, the arcade operator can choose whether or not he wants blood to appear for the attacks with a special option switch, but for the Dreamcast version, it's only set to no blood. Finally, we've added a special mode called the Power Stone Collection. If you clear the Arcade Mode, then you can get new items and play some mini-games on the VMS.

**GR: WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANTED TO DO FOR THE NAOMI VERSION THAT YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO AND SO DECIDED TO PUT INTO THE DREAMCAST VERSION?**

TT: There was one thing that we really wanted to do for the Dreamcast version, but in the end I don't think we're going to have enough time to put it in. We tried to create a special four-player version of *Power Stone*, but it's pushing the limits of the Dreamcast and we probably won't be able to get it ready in time for its release. More than that, having four players requires us to rethink the entire balance of the game, and that would take a lot of time and effort as well. However, I think it's very likely that any *Power Stone* sequel would be able to have a four-player battle.



Power Stone will introduce all-new 3D fighting game concepts to the market when it is released, and apparently Capcom intends to attract a wide range of audiences in the process.

GR: SINCE THE FOREIGN RELEASE OF THE DREAMCAST IS STILL AWHILE AWAY, WILL YOU BE MAKING ANY CHANGES FOR THE FOREIGN VERSIONS OF POWER STONE?

TT: We haven't even released the arcade version, let alone finish the Dreamcast version, so it's far too early to say. However, if we wanted to change or add something, then we've got plenty of time to do it. To tell the truth, the European version will probably be exactly the same, but the American version might be slightly different because it's NTSC, the same as Japan.

GR: WILL YOU BE MAKING USE OF THE GD-ROM TO PUT SOME SPECIAL ENDING MOVIES IN FOR THE CHARACTERS?

TT: To tell the truth, we've already created these movies, but the current Dreamcast libraries don't yet support movies, so we're unable to put them in. There's a very good chance that we'll be able to put these into the foreign versions later on, but nothing's been decided on yet.

GR: NOW THAT THE ARCADE VERSION IS COMPLETE, WHAT'S YOUR FINAL IMPRESSION OF THE GAME?

TT: *Power Stone* is a completely new type of game, and when you make a new game instead of a sequel, the possibility of failure always increases. In particular, with a new concept there's always the danger of going too far, but I'm proud that we've been able to make a fun game that really anyone can play. In many respects, it's not the traditional type of Capcom game, and many of the core users we talked to at the location tests were unhappy with certain features, such as the lack of a guard button. However, if we changed these areas, *Power Stone* would be the same as every other game we've ever produced. Even though we've never created this type of a game before, I don't see any reason why we can't create it now and for it to become another Capcom style of game. This time I think we've created something that can become a very big product, and the opportunity for future development is there. When we first started designing *Power Stone*, we didn't want to aim it for the core users but for the general mass market. You'll notice that even the character illustrations are not the typical Capcom style. We want to attract people to our games who wouldn't normally play them, and I hope that everyone will have a go on *Power Stone*.



WE FELT IT WAS TIME TO INTERVIEW THE CREATORS OF THE DREAMCAST'S WACKIEST GAME SO FAR, PEN PEN TRICELON, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE RUMORS LATELY SUGGESTING THAT IT MIGHT COME TO THE U.S. AS A LAUNCH TITLE. THESE GUYS ARE TRULY COMMITTED EX-SEGA EMPLOYEES...SO EXPECT ANYTHING OUT OF THEM IN THE FUTURE!

an interview with the creators of **PEN PEN TRICELON**

GR: After your success with games such as *Sega Rally* and the *Panzer* series, why did you decide to leave Sega and form Land Ho?

LH: It wasn't the case that we all left Sega and came here for the same reason. Everyone had their own individual motives for wanting to leave, but we had the idea of getting together to form our own team. However, at the moment we're working at General Entertainment as company employees. This means that we can participate in other projects and do other things as well.

GR: *Land Ho* is a fairly small team. Will this affect the type of projects you can do?

LH: Although there are only nine people in the team, we still have a broad range of skills. More importantly, because we are small we can make the best of everyone's talents, which is why we all came here. We can now actively participate in a game's creation. When a lot of people work on a project, the development becomes just like a production line and you lose the creative element. Now we can all talk together and decide on matters, which is how things used to be done in the past. Whether a game is interesting or not has no relation to the number of people working on it. At our current size we believe that we can still create games that are fun for everyone.

GR: Do you still have any links with Sega because of your development with the Dreamcast, and will this affect the kind of games you'll produce?

LH: We're developing on the Dreamcast now, which means that we are technically a business partner, but other than that we have nothing to do with Sega. More than that, we're not limited to just the Dreamcast. The reason we chose to make a DC race game first was that it was easy for us to do, but we're not limited to any one type of game. More than just concentrating on genres, we're more interested in the target user. We want to make games that anyone can play, not just core users.

GR: How much time did you spend researching the hardware?

LH: We started development almost straight away and researched the hardware as we created the game. Rather than researching the hardware and then deciding what game we could do, it was more the case that we knew what we wanted to do and just tried it. Where something was too difficult to do, we simply chose a slightly different direction. When we started, the hardware wasn't fully complete, so we had no idea how far we could go until we tried it anyway. We started on the Step 2 hardware, which was just a PC graphics board, and then progressed up to Step 5, so in order to work with the new versions of the hardware we had to rewrite *Pen Pen* many times. In general, the hardware kept

getting faster, but there were cases when it actually got slower, as with Step 4.

GR: With the power of the Dreamcast, were you able to put everything in that you wanted to?

LH: Actually, there were a lot of things we wanted to add but in the end we had to cut. We wanted more characters in the races and more detail in the courses, but there's a limit to the Dreamcast's power and we didn't have enough polygons to be able to do all that in the four-player mode. After all, that's four times the number of polygons that are in the one-player mode. Even now we have had to cut down on the number of polygons we used in 4-player, but we've done it in such a way that you don't notice it.

GR: Can you tell us about the start of the *Pen Pen* project?

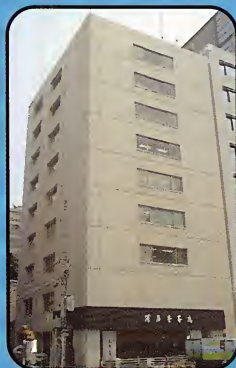
LH: It started in October 1997, but at that time there were just two people working on it. First of all, we had the image of a penguin. The way it walks, swims and jumps is completely different and we thought that this was interesting. Thus our initial idea was to use penguins in some kind of race game. That was the start, and from there we all discussed what kind of game we could do. The programmers and designers then began work on creating the game from around January 1998.

GR: Had you already decided on the complete control system before development started?

LH: Not at all. All we knew was that we wanted a stroke movement for the swimming and sliding. Overall we wanted to keep the buttons as simple as possible, so that's why we decided to keep the controls the same for sliding, swimming and running, even though the actions are different. We were concerned about the stroke mechanism because the timing is very important, and we worried about how long it would take the players to get used to it. In particular, the game's total concept was to have the players racing together, entangled in a bunch, and it was how to represent this best that we were thinking about until the very end. We could have made the *Pen Pen* run a lot faster, but if we had done so, then it would have been much more difficult to do attacks, and part of the fun is being able to obstruct the other players.

GR: How did you go about creating the courses?

LH: First of all we decided on the themes for each course. We had various ideas, but in the end we chose sweet, unexplored regions, toy and horror. Then, along with the designers, we decided what things would be appropriate for each course. With the three elements of swimming, sliding and running, it would have been difficult to have put them all on one short course that you kept going around in a circle. We wanted a lot of variation, so the one long course was better suited. However, we weren't sure just how long we could make them and still keep them interesting. We had so many ideas that we wanted to put in, but if you have too



These people created and programmed the *Panzer Dragoon* series. That's enough credit for any developer to stake claim to. Of course, there's also *Rayearth*, *Nights*, and *Daytona CCE*...damn!



many things, it all gets mixed up. There are now only four areas per course, although we wanted to have five areas originally.

GR: Why did you put all the various "trap" devices throughout the courses?

LH: Well, in a normal race game, once the opponent has taken the lead, it can often be very difficult to catch up and soon you're left trailing behind. In *Pen Pen* we wanted the characters to be racing together, so we included these devices to slow down the front runners and give the players at the back a chance to catch up. With just one of these devices, it's possible to go from last to first place.

GR: Were there stage devices you wanted to put in the game but had to leave out?

LH: One idea we considered was for a massive pinball machine where there were a pair of large flippers moving from left to right, but the characters would get caught behind the flipper, and then they'd be stuck. On the toy course we wanted a place with various shaped buttons. If you jumped on the red button, then ahead of you a giant red block would rise up, or if you walked on the blue button, then a giant blue block would rise up. Any Pen Pen standing on the giant blocks would then be catapulted into the air. However, this was far too complex and would have slowed the game down too much.

GR: Why did you decide to have the various kinds of Pen Pen?

LH: Originally we were just going to use normal penguins, but we wanted to add various abilities to them to turn them into good swimmers or fast runners. As a plain penguin doesn't have much of a visual impact, we created the Pen Pen which have the features of the animal closest to their abilities. First we had an image of the animal we wanted to base a Pen Pen on, then we decided what sort of movement and features it should have. Originally, there were many different types of Pen Pen from which we picked seven types and Hanamizu. Other types we designed but didn't use were the Cat Pen, Gorilla Pen, Fish Pen and Panda Pen. We only used real animals because we wanted the players to be able to guess the characteristics of each character just from its appearance.

GR: Was it difficult to match the rhythm and tempo of the music to match the various areas in the courses?

LH: The music team looked at the finished designs for each course and tried to judge how long they would last, then created the music long enough to last for the full length. They were very clever to time the music so that it would climax at the appropriate point. Music composition started around the summer of 1998, but rather than trying to confuse them with various images for the courses, we just let them play the courses and judge for themselves what tunes would be most suitable.

GR: How did you sample the special sound effects?

LH: Some of the sound effects such as the sliding "whoosh" and the jumping "boing" are all done with human voices. We tried various effects but they didn't work out, so we mimicked the sounds by mouth and then edited them later to get the effects we were after.

GR: Which parts of the game are you most proud of?

LH: The characters' expressions are very realistic and natural, so you really do get the feeling that the Pen Pens do exist. They're not cars or bikes but living creatures, and I think that's where we've been able to express their motion beautifully. In addition, anyone can play *Pen Pen*. The whole family can play it, from children to parents. With just the one stroke button, it's really simple, so even very young children can play it.

GR: What will happen to Pen Pen now?

LH: Well, we're talking to SoA at the moment about a possible release this year for the American market, but nothing's been decided on yet. There are still a lot of things we'd like to redo, but if you start that, then there's no limit. If any changes are required, then we'll do them ourselves. We could do a network version, because we'd like to make use of the Dreamcast's modem. Maybe it's too late this time for us to do that. We can't say whether this game will become a series, but we want to look after the characters. Even if we don't do another racing game, there's plenty of scope for them to appear in another kind of game.

TEAM LAND HO

TOMOHIRO KONDO (System Design & Planning)

Panzer Dragoon 1, Panzer Dragoon 2

ATSUHIKO NAKAMURA (System Design & Planning)

Sega Rally Championship, Daytona USA Circuit Edition

JUNICHI SUTO (System Program)

Panzer Dragoon 1, Panzer Dragoon 2

AKIHITO WADA (Course Program)

Let's Create a J-League Pro-Soccer Club 1 & 2

SHIN FUTAKAWAME (Character Program)

Magical Knight Rayearth, Azel Panzer Dragoon

TAKUMI MIYAKI (Character & Motion Design)

Nights, Chaotix

JINA ISHIWATARI (Course & Background Design)

Sonic 1 & 2, Azel Panzer Dragoon

SAORI WADA (Course & Background Design)

Sega Rally Championship, Greatest Nine

HARUMI MASUDA (Enemy Design & Enemy Motion Design)

Victory Goal, Greatest Nine

MASANOBU TSUKAMOTO (Promotion & Publicity)

DAISAKU IKEJIRI (Promotion & Publicity)





1

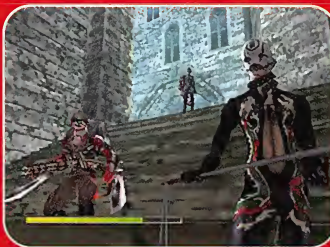
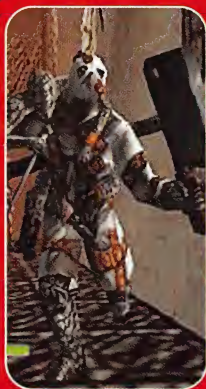
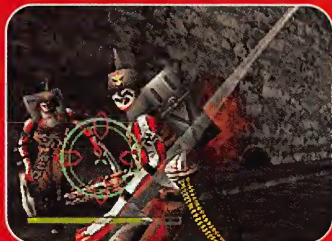
MAKEN X (demon sword x)

play as a sword in atlas' dark action title

Known as the creators of the *Megami Tensei* series, Atlus is currently deep into the development of *Maken X*, a dark action title due sometime in 1999. The title comes from the Japanese word, "maken," which means vicious sword, and the main character in this game is, curiously enough, a sword. It cannot move on its

own, so the player has to invade the minds of specific characters, which then enables movement. This is called a "brain jack." There are more than 10 characters that can be "brain jacked," and depending on which character you take over, your abilities will differ. If you take control of an agile character, quick actions can be utilized; if you capture the mind of a powerful character, the sword may, for example, change into a hatchet with which you can perform massive attacks. In addition, the story changes depending on which character you possess.

All the character movements in *Maken X* are said to be displayed at 60 fps. In addition to great graphics, the game will adopt a form of surround sound so that you can tell from what direction an enemy is approaching. We'll have more on the grim looking *Maken X* in an upcoming issue.



2

PERIPHERALS

fly, fish and shoot with style

Puru Puru Pak - Sega's answer to the Dual-Shock pad and Rumble Pak is set to be released on March 4 of this year. It features a manually configurable vibration rate so that players can adjust the shock waves to suit their gaming pleasure. Supposedly costing around ¥1,800 yen (\$16), the device supports *Godzilla Generations*, *Pen Pen Tricelon*, *Sonic Adventure*, *Evolution*, and *Sengoku Turb*.

Dreamcast Gun - Designed for a more functional purpose than the Saturn's Virtua Gun, the new DC gun is quite a bit smaller than its predecessor, while remaining the same weight. This allows for steadier control over aiming, and the actual accuracy of the gun's light mechanism is said to

have been improved. Looking more like a prop from Buck Rogers, we are all excited about the gun's simultaneous release with *HOTD2* on March 25.

ASCII Mission Stick - The first 3rd party controller for the DC comes from those Kings of peripherals, ASCII. Featuring a space-age mouse-type device, this controller was designed primarily for flight simulators. ASCII state that other games are totally playable using the device, but we remain skeptical. To be released at the end of March.

Dreamcast Fishing Controller - If you have ever been scared by computer-generated scaly piscine, then now is time to reel 'em in and club 'em on the head with the new DC fishing rod. To be used with *Get Bass! Fishing* and other haddock-related games, this can be yours for the bargain price of ¥5,800 yen (\$51) sometime in the spring.



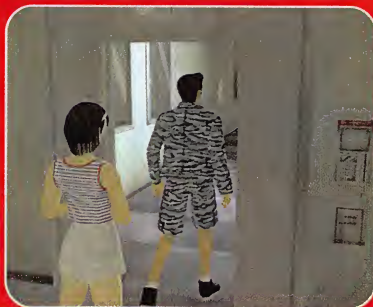


3 7 secret mansions

Koei get literal with their first DC title

Koei will release the first two-player adventure game for Dreamcast called *Nanatsu no Hikan* (*Seven Secret Mansions*) sometime this year. *Nanatsun no Hikan* is based on a novel by Kageki Shimoda, and initially was scheduled to be released for Saturn. So far the game is about 50 percent complete.

The main characteristic of the game is a system called Pair-Con (Pair-Combination, or Pair-Control), which will enable two players to play the game simultaneously and cooperatively on a split screen. Depending on the scenario, the two players can get together to solve problems or each can engage in a solo mission. Because of this new system, it is important to have good communication between the two players in order to accomplish the missions in the game. Also, there is a one-player mode with a significantly altered story for those who want to play alone. Koei certainly remain unique developers, and it will be interesting to see what they do with the Dreamcast's power and the novel concept of its two-player split-screen concurrent play. It's far too early, however, to speculate about a possible U.S. version, but it's certainly not out of the question.



4 SUPER SPEED RACING

High speed CART racing comes to dreamcast

Another exciting racing game from Sega is coming on March 25. *Super Speed Racing* trades the dirt and dust of rally for the nose-to-tail battle of Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART). Not only are real CART teams on hand, but also the drivers and cars of the 1998 season. The roar of 2.6-liter turbo engines has also been directly sampled from the real thing. The game will have 19 official racetracks including Long Beach, Detroit, and Toronto. Twenty-seven official CART drivers from 17 different teams can be selected, and Sega have cleverly timed the release of *Super Speed Racing* to precede this year's CART race in Motegi, Japan.

It will be interesting to see how well Sega succeed in graphically recreating this motor race. Unlike *Sega Rally 2*, in which players mostly see just one other car and courses are curve-intensive, CART

will have 27 other race cars and long oval tracks where everything is visible, putting huge strain on the hardware. It will be a testament to the power of the Dreamcast if it can pull this off. We should see a version of *SSR* on these shores after the Dreamcast launches on 9/9/99.



Welcome to another month of Game Boy Color mania! This month we're hitting you with a trio of upcoming games that'll keep you glued to the small color screen that we've all grown to love (and sometimes curse)

here at the GR offices. Keep your eyes glued to these pages in the coming months for more in-depth Game Boy Color coverage, as the small purple machine again takes over the gaming world!

PRINCE OF PERSIA



MINDSCAPE - 1999 I can still recall the many hours lost on my trusty old Commodore 64 playing *Prince of Persia*: trying to get past another tricky trap or puzzle, fighting the Grand Vizier's evil swordsmen, timing that jump just right...and losing more lives than my old computer could calculate. But I remember how different this game was from its contemporaries, how the characters moved like real people, and not like the jerky little sprites so common in those days. The game's creator, Jordan Mechner, was truly ahead of his time, and the fact that the original code is being ported over to the Game Boy Color to replicate the game of old is a testament to his skills.

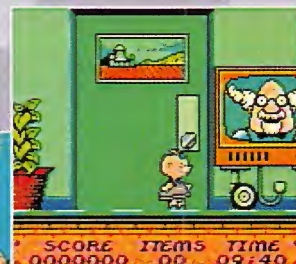
We're told that Mindscape is upping the ante, however: in the tradition of *Zelda DX*, they are adding an additional, all-new level, as well as brand-new enemies to contend with. Unfortunately, for my gaming skills, the one-hour time limit is still in place, so I fear the Princess may have to marry Jaffara a few more times before I make it through this new adaptation.



GAME BOY COLOR BY EDD FEAR

RUGRATS: THE MOVIE

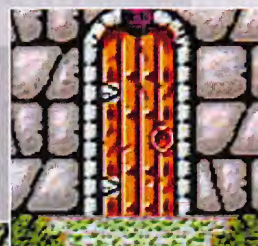
THQ - 1999 In 1997, while putting together a bid to produce the website for the *Rugrats* movie, I took the time to interview friends who had young children, as well as the little rugrats themselves, to get a feel for the impact of the cartoon. No one seemed prepared for the phenomenon that the *Rugrats* property has become, but Klasky-Csupo and Nickelodeon must be doing something right! They've licensed the GBC game rights to THQ, who have turned out a Game Boy platformer in which you can play one of the five *Rugrats* characters, and as Angelica, Tommy, Chuckie, Phil and Lil, you explore the world given to you by THQ, going through fourteen levels of low-elevation hijinks. And although the franchise is aimed at the younger set, there's enough substance for the older folks, too, just like the cartoon. This looks to be a worthy addition to the GBC's growing collection of great games.



SHADOWGATE CLASSIC

HEMCO/NINTENDO - 1999 Another direct port of an older, quite popular game, *Shadowgate Classic* returns us to the days of the NES as Kemco presents this early RPG on the small screen. This game was a bridge of sorts from the early text-based adventure games on the Commodore, Apple, and TRS-80 machines (*Zork*, anyone?) to the modern graphical RPGs we know and love today. In this classic, your character is the last in a long line of kings, and must venture through a series of rooms (dare we say a dungeon?), solve puzzles, collect items, and battle nasty creatures of many varieties. In other words, die. A lot. Luckily, you get unlimited lives (I used a dozen or so right away!), and the save feature allows you to take your time getting through this little monster. While the interface may seem cumbersome compared to modern games, I still had people crowding around my desk to sneak a peek, as they remembered the classic music and the many hours spent with this game back in the day.

Nintendo hope to sell more than a few of these game cartridges to *Shadowgate* fans anticipating the release of *Shadowgate 64* and *Shadowgate Rising*, both for the Nintendo 64. And I'll guess they most certainly will.



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Mother is the name for God on the lips and hearts of all children.
-Eric Draven

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS

Four "A" games in one month across three platforms! The first quarter is shaping up to be a quality season as all the games that got held over Christmas are beginning to roll out. Whether it's Racing, Action, Horror, or Role Playing, there's a quality release on the schedule.

GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|----|
| Baldur's Gate | A | | |
| Beetle Adv. Racing | A- | B+ | B+ |
| Guardian Crusade | B | | |
| Legend of Legaia | C+ | C+ | B |
| Mario Party | B+ | B | B |
| Roll Cage | B | B | B |
| Silent Hill | A | A- | A- |
| T'ai Fu | B+ | | |
| Vigilante 2 | B+ | B | B |
| Blast Radius | B- | B- | C+ |
| Rampage Univ. Tour | C | | |

IMPORT REVIEWS

| | | | |
|------------------|----|----|----|
| Sengoku Turb | C- | | |
| Snow Kids Plus | C | | |
| Bloody Roar 2 | B+ | | |
| Internal Section | B- | | |
| Erzwajj | B+ | | |
| Evolution | B | B- | B |
| Sega Rally 2 | A- | A- | A- |

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEW SYSTEM

- (A+)** — [A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature the highest quality visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. *Example: Silent Hill*
- (A)** — [A- to B] Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or any number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. *Example: T'ai Fu*
- (B)** — [B- to C] Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems and a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. *Example: Blast Radius*
- (C)** — [C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: Sengoku Turb*
- (D)** — [D- to F] Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Turok 2 GBC*
- (F)**

1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.

2. Games marked in **GREEN** should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned]



It happens every now and then. I tend to vanish from life. I miss appointments, neglect friends, and even break dates. Bills go unpaid, that health-conscious diet I was on is forgotten, and I spend very few hours outside. I'm not normally antisocial, reclusive or even close to introverted. But it happens. This time, I blame it all on *Baldur's Gate*, a game that has revitalized my deep passion for role playing, enraged some of my closest friends, and had me inseparable from my PC for days on end.

Bioware's *Baldur's Gate* is an RPG that contains a wondrous mix of sights and sounds, a revolutionary battle system that melds real-time and turn-based modes, and a rich, engaging plot. But more important, it is a perfected modern interpretation of the venerable AD&D role-playing experience.

With exceptional clarity, each location stylistically blends rendered and hand-drawn 16 bit artwork – whether it's a quaint town, a charming country cottage or farm, a kobold-infested mine, a blood-soaked gnomish stronghold, wyvern infested cave, corpse ridden catacomb, or the magical, luminous city streets of Baldur's Gate at twilight. Wonderfully drawn and animated spiders, skeletons, kobolds, gnolls, wyverns, golems, and carrion crawlers (to name but a wee fraction) scurry from unseen territory, threatening your every move as you explore the vast, mysterious forests and scenic coastal plains. As battles ensue, mages and priests cast spells accompanied by brilliant optical effects, paladins slash away with magical swords, and archers launch mystical piercing arrows. Day fades to night, clouds roll in

and darken your vision, rain pours, and thunderclaps cut the ambience while lightning illuminates the environment around you.

Stunning orchestrations that change from day to night and from battle to exploration are inspiring, setting the perfect mood for what is to come. As you walk through populated city streets, muddled chatter of the townsfolk can be heard all around you, birds are chirping in the trees, a town crier can be heard in the distance, and crickets come out at night to play their creaky song. Upon exploring the countryside, you will encounter roaring falls, whispering winds, crumbling caves and forests thick with the sounds of wildlife. This ambience not only roots the experience in reality, but also keeps it from becoming stale even if you are travelling through the same area for the tenth time.

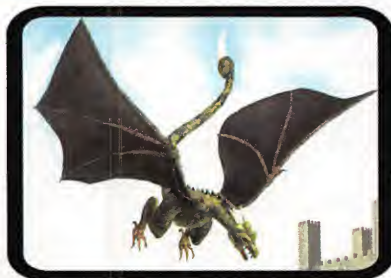
Bioware's biggest challenge with *Baldur's Gate* was to design and implement a contemporary battle system that would not alienate the most traditional of AD&D fans. Surely taking a risk, they took the turn-based paradigm into the untried world of real-time. With colors flying everywhere, the game succeeds by managing to create a combat system that can appeal to anyone, regardless of previous knowledge of AD&D rules. At any moment during play, the game can be paused, allowing players to assign individual commands to each character, and then watch the action transpire when the pause is released. Once you discover how to use this feature effectively, its brilliance shines through and the game becomes that much more enjoyable to play.

Thanks largely to a wonderfully rich script that

BALDUR'S GATE

BY DAVE REES

*The Forgotten Realms' Sword Coast holds many, many secrets...
Uncover the mystery behind your destiny... Make the journey to Baldur's Gate*



Welcome to the sprawling, enchanting world of Baldur's Gate. A vast land of coastal plains, creepy forests, haunted ruins, bustling circuses, and sparkling cities – where your journey is truly one of wonderment, suspense, and danger.





is altered primarily depending on your actions, reputation and alignment, the game's story has an incalculable number of possible paths. Throughout its seven long suspense-filled chapters—a journey that will take some players up to 100 hours to complete—questions are many and answers are few. Slowly, but not painfully, the truth emerges and your purpose, which is far greater than what you would expect, comes into view. And as is in any true role-playing game, numerous opportunities arise to perform sub-quests to increase reputation and experience points. What results is an incredibly deep, open-ended story that is molded by both your words and actions.

Amazingly, Bioware have also managed to make this impressive achievement available as a multiplayer experience. Packaged with a customized version of GameSpyLite and Heat, players can intuitively join other games or host their own and enjoy the experience with friends. The host of the game, or DM so to speak, can assign ownership of characters and set up various restrictions. This feature rounds out the package perfectly.

The pathfinding in *Baldur's Gate* leaves a bit to be desired, but there is an option to use waypoints to facilitate navigation in crowded locations. Tight spots and building-laden cities, which otherwise cause your characters to get stuck, can be traversed perfectly. However, arbitrary dungeons can still cause moments of frustration and require

significant micro-management. But this issue is easily overlooked in the end.

Baldur's Gate is a monument of modern AD&D role playing: a gripping story, an illustrious visual presentation, exceptional musical scores, a wonderful sense of ambience, a revolutionary battle system that provides the best of both worlds and, of course, strict adherence to AD&D rules. It has been a long time since a role playing game has come together this well. With the announcements of *Plane Scape Torment*, which looks incredible, and the *Baldur's Gate* expansion pack, it looks like the next wait won't be so long.



The creative efforts that went into the game's wonderfully painted visuals must have demanded an exorbitant amount of manpower. The game is worth its price for its visual presence alone. The good news is that we will likely see much more of the same quality in the near future: several AD&D titles that use the game's engine, including Plane Scape Torment and an expansion to Baldur's Gate, are on the way!



■ **INGENIOUS, INNOVATIVE REAL-TIME BATTLE SYSTEM**
■ **BREATHAKING GRAPHICS AND AMBIENCE**

■ **VAST STORY CAN CHANGE DEPENDING ON YOUR ACTIONS**
■ **UNPRECEDENTED MULTIPLAYER OPTION ADDS VALUE**

REPUBLIC SAYS...

TRULY A MEMORABLE GAMING EXPERIENCE... THE SINGLE PLAYER GAME ALONE IS WORTH THE PRICE OF ADMISSION. AND THE MULTIPLAYER GAME IS JUST AS STRONG!

A



Don't Bug me, I'm playing Beetle Adventure! EA and Paradigm's New Beetle racer has it all!

Considering what the Nintendo 64 has too little of and is especially good at – long, deep, adventurous racers – *Beetle Adventure Racing* is a welcome addition to the N64's arsenal of alternative racers. Smartly licensing Motor Trend Magazine's '99 Import Car of the Year Volkswagen Beetle for this exclusive N64 endeavor, EA have crafted a racer around it that may well be one of the best on the system yet.

For starters, the models themselves are pristine beauties that glimmer as the terrain reflects off of their bulbous frames. The hip drum 'n' bass accompaniment and Miyamoto-like level intros are cool as well, adding polish to an already thoroughly choice racer. At the core of this well-put-together game is a successful, skillfully executed mixture of racing and adventure elements. Each and every locale is laced with a vast assortment

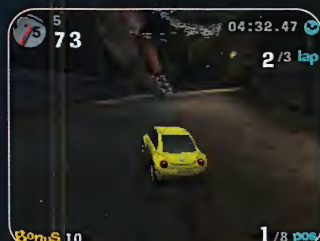
of shortcuts and hidden areas, as well as crates that, when broken, render temperate bursts of Nitro or points that lead to bonus items (like new arenas for the Beetle Battle) and cheat codes. We're not talkin' the common breed of visible side roads here either, but bona fide hidden arteries and back roads that may or may not pay off in the long run. Technically speaking, the engine at work is shockingly robust, exhibiting a steadily smooth frame rate among vastly populated courses, textured skillfully and designed with the driver in mind. Fahrvergnügen! There's nary a pinch of pop-up, and everything has a solid look and feel. I'd have to say this could be Paradigm's best work since *Pilotwings 64*.

The meat of the action takes place in the Championship mode, although there are also Single Race, Two Player, and Beetle Battle modes to choose from. A no-holds-barred race-fest where the first Beetle to collect six ladybugs and find the exit wins, the four-player Beetle Battle is a blast. A certifiable four-player game in its own right, it features an array of weaponry and items like mines, rockets, and health. Vast replayability, fresh concepts, great visuals, excellent music, and great control in tow, *Beetle Adventure Racing* is N64 racing the way it was meant to be. ⚡



BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING

BY DAVE HALVERSON



■ EXCELLENT PHYSICS AND CONTROL
■ LONG BRANCHING TRACKS: THE BIGGEST EVER!

■ XLNT (THOUGH A TAD REPETITIOUS) SOUNDTRACK
■ ENORMOUSLY REPLAYABLE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

PARADIGM AND EA HAVE PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL AND CREATED ONE OF THE BEST N64 RACING GAMES TO DATE. THIS IS ONE RACER THAT TRULY HAS IT ALL.



Beetle Adventure Racing / 01148
Nintendo 64 / 04628



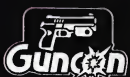
Wild game, baby.



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GUARDIAN CRUSADE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

If there is one genre in which the PlayStation has outshined every other console, past or present, it is with RPGs. PlayStation owners have been privy to some of the best ever: *FF7*, *Suikoden*, *Wild Arms*, *FF Tactics*, *Xenogears*, *Lunar*, *Breath of Fire*. The list is long and very impressive. As a result, a category once deemed too risky by many a U.S. third party is now being embraced by a number of U.S. companies, the latest being Activision with their acquisition of *Knight & Baby* (renamed *Guardian Crusade*) from Tamsoft, the creators of the *Toshinden* and *Choro Q* series. What sets *Guardian Crusade* apart from the role-playing pack is its defined look, exceptional detail, and a little character I like to call McPoo. Actually, its name is Baby, but you can name your fat little pink pet anything you want. This funny lookin' little fella is dropped from his comfy diaper wrap when the stork delivering him to the God Tower is attacked. He lands right in front of our fearless Knight's path, and, well, that's where you come in. I aptly named my knight Storm, of course, and went on my way. How your adventure unfurls (a unique new feature to role playing) greatly relies on your relationship with Baby, so give him snacks whenever possible, play fetch often (but not too often) and fight smart, or he may turn on you – and the little freak bites pretty hard. On the surface, *GC* is a methodical, traditional RPG in every way – event-driven as you journey from town to town, fighting beasts to earn money (Rubies) for stronger weapons, healing ointments, and spells. Where the game draws its appeal is from its graphic presentation, coupled with the interaction with Baby and a plethora of devices called “living toys.” The living toys concept is a brilliant one, since





At the core of any RPG worth investing your time in must lie a strong combat system. Tamsoft obviously know this: the compilation of *Baby* and all of the "Living Toys" keep the fights from becoming an exercise in monotonous button pushing.



*If it looks like a baby and it smells like a baby...
It must be a big fat pink baby! Get it home and you da' man!*

there are up to 70, and they are almost all hidden. These funky little Gizmos (designed by a toy maker named Jepeto, whom you may run into during the game) come in all shapes and sizes. Some heal, some strike, some steal, and some even hypnotize, but it is with them that the more strategic battles are won and lost. My favorite is a little guy who goes by the name Samurai. Straw hat in tow, he comes complete with his own ancient Japanese theme song as he winds into battle. The world in which *GC* takes place is wonderfully fantastical as well. From seaside villages that farm Fur Fish to a mysterious religious cult located deep in the mountainous regions, you meet a truly odd cross section of humanity along the way as the engaging story unfolds. And par for the course from Tamsoft, the music fits the onscreen action well, creating an overall definitive aura of role-playing goodness. A bit on the short side (20-25 hours), you can

play a lot longer if you explore once you learn to either fly with Baby or acquire the water bug – and this is one RPG that is definitely replayable, due to all of the hidden elements. Although not much is left to chance due to the fact that Nehani, your little fairy friend, is always by your side to tell you what you should be doing, you use her at your discretion. Her role makes *GC* a great entry-level RPG, and takes away the guesswork for those who like to constantly push on rather than figure out where to go next. I definitely recommend this surprising acquisition across the board to RPG players looking for a good light-hearted jaunt, and I applaud Activision for not only localizing it swiftly but doing an excellent job with the translation. There are some truly funny moments in *Guardian Crusade*, yet they in no way stray from or distract the game's flow. Now all Tamsoft need to do is begin a sequel... Hey, *Toshinden RPG* – whaddaya think? ⚡



NIGHT & BABY

- GREAT DETAIL THROUGHOUT
- XLNT BATTLE SYSTEM KEEPS THE FIGHTING FRESH

- NICE LITTLE STORY & GREAT CHARACTER DESIGN
- A LITTLE SHORT AND A BIT ON THE EASY SIDE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

TAMSOFT'S FIRST RPG IS SURPRISINGLY PLAYABLE AND UNIQUE IN MANY WAYS. NOW I REALLY THINK IT'S TIME TO REVISIT TOSHINDEN...

B

LEGEND OF LEGAIA

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Typical RPG battle systems got you down?

The producers of Wild Arms offer a cure

After making my way through the first half of *Legend of Legaia*, I accepted the fact that the insipid story of an evil mist choking the land was not about to gather momentum into the second stretch of the journey. Character development continued on a shallow course, conversations with the townspeople existed only to push the game forward, and the inexorable mission to revive life-giving Genesis trees limited the story's element of suspense. In the end, the story existed as little more than a display stand for the innovative and involving battle system.

No dedicated RPG gamer will be provoked by the familiar, simple interfaces and typical heap of magic and items linked to *Legend of Legaia's* battles, but once the turn-based combat ensues, things begin to get very interesting. Drawing their focus of attack from exaggerated hand-to-hand combat, characters must string together a wide array of convincingly brutal combinations that are initiated by a sequence of moves on the directional pad. Developed mostly through experimentation—this is a big part of the fun—these nicely animated, 3D-fighting-like confrontations join the excellent music to become the lifeblood of the game, saving it from the uninspired quest and sweeping lack of visual pop.

But let's not give the battle system too much credit, because after engaging the enemy nearly every step of the way and sitting through a fair share of loading time, even the most patient gamers will start to question the game's entertainment value. But bypass high expectations and allow *Legend of Legaia* to play its strong suits, and the adventure amounts to nothing worse than a near miss. ❄



- INNOVATIVE BATTLES KEEP THE GAME INTERESTING
- 6000 MUSIC AND BATTLE SOUNDS

- POLYGONAL TOWNS AND DUNGEONS NEED SPRUCING UP
- TRAVELLING THE WORLD MAP IS ANNOYINGLY SLOW

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A BANAL STORY AND WIDELY AVERAGE VISUAL STYLE LEAVE THE EXCELLENT BATTLES TO POWER THIS HIT-AND-MISS RPG. ONLY THE DEDICATED FANS OF THE GENRE NEED APPLY.

C+

Legaia

A20
• 12.7m
• M20 M25

99



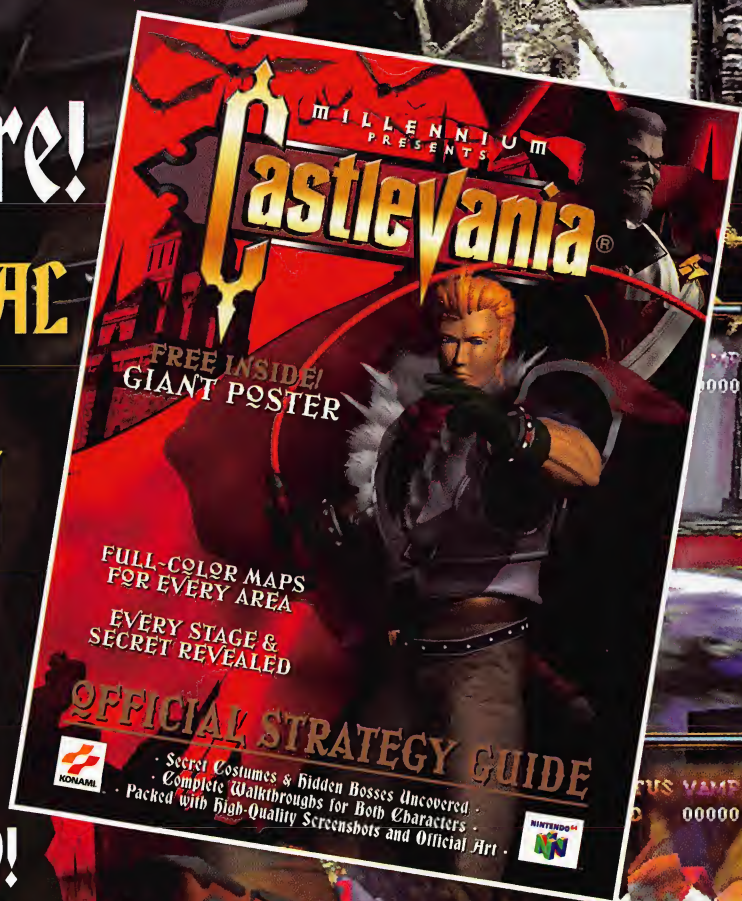
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Nintendo's four-player tirade continues in this all-star party experience
Mario and friends duke it out in this new-wave interactive board game

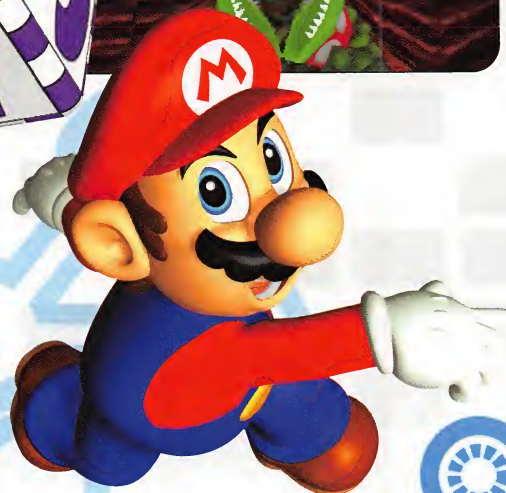
MARIO PARTY

BY MIKE HOBBS



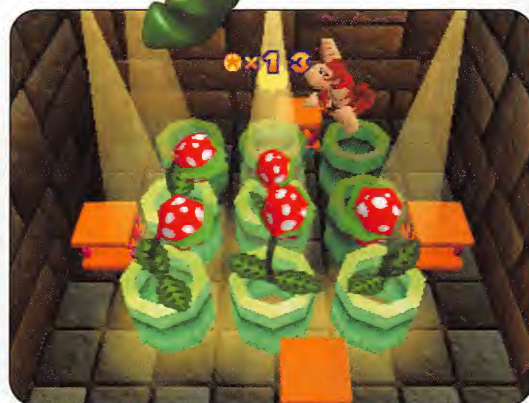
Nintendo obviously don't want the N64's quadruple controller ports sucking air. Along with the four-player madness that is *Smash Bros.*, this month's cover story, *Mario Party*, invites you and three of your favorite gaming partners into the saccharin world of Nintendo to compete in a rollicking video board game. And like *Smash Bros.*, *Mario Party* was designed from the start as a four-player game, and as such, is only at its very best when played this way.

There are six classic Nintendo characters to choose from here – Mario, Luigi, Peach, Yoshi, Wario, and Donkey Kong. After selecting your characters, you choose one of six boards with which to move around on. Places like Bowser's Magma Mountain, Luigi's Engine Room and Yoshi's Tropical Island are replete with the distinctive look and feel of Nintendo's universe. By smacking a quickly shifting numbered block with your head (serving the same function here as rolling a die), you get to move so many spaces around the game board. Now this is where the game gets interesting. After each player has his or her own turn, one of the 50 multiplayer





mini-games commences. Here, it's a two-on-two, three-on-one, or four-player versus battle for coins – the key to success in *Mario Party*. It's here in the mini-games that Nintendo's classic sense of gameplay comes to the fore. Slot car races, diving for buried treasure, inflating giant Bowser balloons, and controlling a hand cart in teams of two are just a few of the action events you'll encounter. There are also more off-the-wall events such as deforming a Bowser face (ala the title screen of *Mario 64*) to match a distorted sample and walking a tightrope while three other players launch cannonballs at you from below. Most events require mad button pressing and some controller-destroying rotation of the analog stick, all designed to make the mini-games fast, hectic fun. There are also six one-player games, arrayed at certain points around the board. One of the more amusing ones has you pedaling a stationary bike like a maniac to light up a lightbulb and scare away a threatening ghost. The point of all these games is to get coins, which you then use to buy Stars (very valuable), pay tolls along the board, or worst of all, lose to Bowser should you run into him.



It's all really great fun, but *Mario Party* must be played by two or more for the most enjoyment. There is a one-player game where you get to play through all the mini-games, or you can compete against three CPU opponents, but neither of these modes are what *Mario Party* is all about. Just look at the name. >=

■ 56 MINI-GAMES OF CLASSIC NINTENDO FUN
■ INDUCES A LOT OF SCREAMIN' AND HOLLERIN'

■ LOVE-IT-OR-HATE-IT NINTENDO AESTHETIC
■ CANNOT BE FULLY ENJOYED BY ONE PLAYER

REPUBLIC SAYS...

WITH MARIO PARTY, NINTENDO DELIVER A HUGE FUN FOUR-PLAYER BOARD GAME WITH LOADS OF GREAT MINI-GAMES. DO NOT PLAY ALONE!

B+



ROLL CAGE

BY MIKE HOBBS

Remember those little RC cars with huge wheels that were large enough to provide ground clearance whether it was right side up or upside down? Within that concept lies the hook of *Roll Cage*, a mad, futuristic combat racing title that has you racing along ceilings and walls as you unleash a bevy of flashy weapons of the colorful and lens-flarey Psygnosis variety.

In addition to the uniqueness of the aforementioned wall crawling, some new ideas are to be found lurking about in the weapons department. The best is a missile which has the ability to collapse a trackside

structure or knock down a hovering sign, putting a huge damper on any racers unfortunate enough to be behind you. Or you can launch a worm hole, swapping places with the person just ahead of you. There are also more familiar armaments such as leader missiles, shields, and turbo boosts.

The concept of racing on ceilings and walls must have been a difficult one to implement, and ATD have done admirably in keeping what could have been a completely out-of-control experience playable. But with that said, I feel it's still a little too easy to get completely crossed up, as the inherent low-gravity feel of the game sends your vehicle careening off corners with you invariably ending up going the wrong way. A mostly effective quick-turn button helps in this area a bit, but the fear of ending up ass-backwards makes the gameplay somewhat tense at times, and not necessarily in an enjoyable way.

Apart from this anomaly, *Roll Cage* is a fast and frenetic combat racer. It has a richly colored look, a strong two-player mode, fantastic weapons, and benefits from a name-brand soundtrack, including the likes of Fatboy Slim and Ed Rush. A good effort at something different from developers ATD and Psygnosis. It should be noted, too, that an incredible-looking accelerated PC version is on its way shortly, and should prove to be an even more intense experience. ➤



*Psygnosis and ATD bring you a furious combat racer
Drive on ceilings and walls to Fatboy Slim!*



■ VIBRANT LIGHTING EFFECTS PROVIDE REQUISITE FLASH
■ EXCITING AND PLAYABLE TWO-PLAYER SPLIT SCREEN

■ GOOD SENSATION OF SPEED
■ BIG-NAME SOUNDTRACK DRIVING THE ACTION

REPUBLIC SAYS...

ROLLCAGE TRIES SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND MOSTLY SUCCEEDS. RACING ALONG CEILINGS AND WALLS CAN BE A THRILLING, IF SOMETIMES OUT OF CONTROL, EXPERIENCE.

B

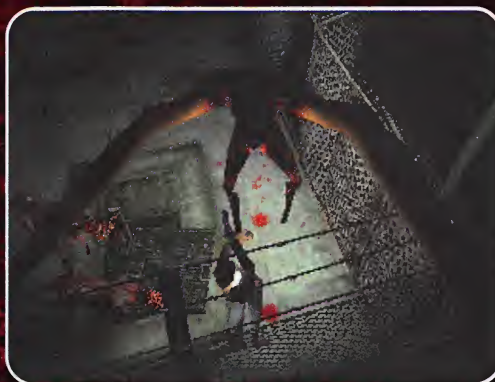
0 31441 07950
PSYGNOSIS
Publisher / 1999 <<
>> RAMP

Silent Hill is one of the great atmospheric achievements in video games, a dreadful, chilling vision of one man's nightmare as he loses his daughter to the shadows of an abandoned resort town. Richly inspired images of uncommon strength underscore the overwhelming darkness, evoking an ominously rising current of tension that washes over us through to the game's gripping climax.

In realizing the inherent restraints of a fully polygonal environment, the game's designers have cleverly bypassed these limitations and actually used them to their advantage. An oppressive layer of fog and darkness looms over the town, holding back the field of vision for relief to the 3D engine, which in turn actually strengthens the unsettling mood and even enhances the gameplay. The setting we focus on immediately in front of us sets up a disquieting effect, but the inability to see far around us fosters a supreme aversion to what may be waiting in the murk.

Vacillating between two planes of reality, the already dilapidated town of Silent Hill often slips into a twisted, hallucinatory state of ruin, punctuated by horribly rusted and profusely dirtied blood-soaked walls and floors. There is a festering sense of despair in every bizarre setting: carousel horses lie in ruin in the sewer; religious

"Silent Hill is meant to shock us, entertain us, charge us with a visceral rush, and it succeeds on all accounts."



The enemies in Silent Hill are relentless. The second you key on one, another crawls from the shadows. Notice the shadowy figures plodding from the darkness in the lower left-hand corner.

SILENT HILL

BY BRADY FIECHTER

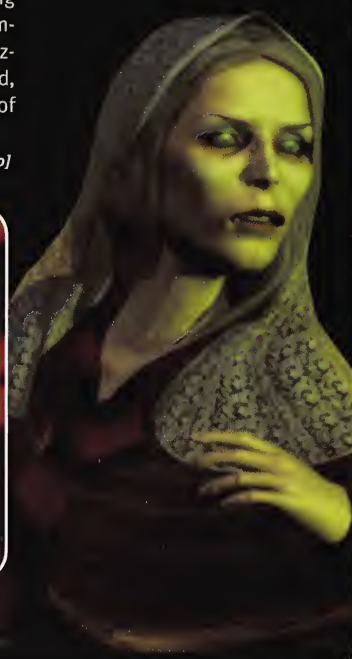
artifacts loom in unlikely places; barbed wire entangles deteriorating corpses all over the town; cries for help are scrawled on walls. Restraint has been completely ignored by Konami's artists, and one detailed scene after another hits us with macabre images that are hard to shake off.

It's creepy enough just exploring the gloom of *Silent Hill*, but the presence of exceptionally gruesome creatures lurking in the darkness only deepens the mood. In the pestilent town hospital, a skillfully enhanced take on the familiar zombie design can be seen in the sickly nurses and doctors, who exhibit massive growths on their backs and slash wildly with scalpels. Swooping down from above, winged demon-like entities attack without warning, slashing at our heads and opening us up to attacks from the sides by skinned gorilla-like creatures with collapsed faces. And the shadowy forms of what appear to be ghosts of babies awkwardly stumble in the classrooms and libraries of an elementary school. The enemies and environments in which they prowl have obviously been inspired by some of the great horror images of cinema, but they have been extended with bristling imagination, and remarkably realized.

Silent Hill is meant to shock us, entertain us, charge us with a visceral rush, and it succeeds on all accounts, partly because of its uncompromising attention to detail. There are exceptional sites before us, but there is inval-

able support from sound effects, music, and cinematic touches. At times, the camera swings into canted angles and sharp movements, distorting the point of view in a way that heightens the illusion of the nightmarish, alternate universe. The grinding music also feeds the roiling tension, but the ambitious use of sound is the key to completing the game's effect: Creatures cry out with agonizing moans and pound loudly on doors when trapped, weapons land with deadening thuds, the cold sound of concrete resonates underfoot.

[CONTINUED]



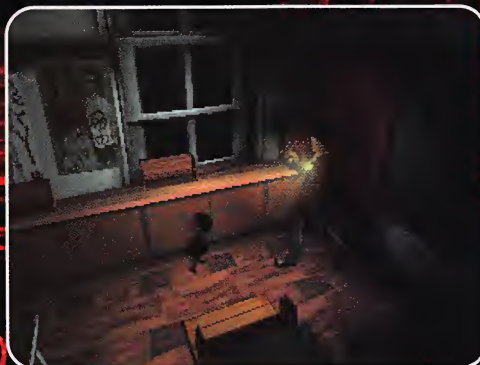
Because the field of vision is cut off by the crushing darkness, illuminated only by the beam of a flashlight, and because of the devilish placement of enemies, it is often difficult to anticipate an attack – yet another element in the game that masterfully keeps us on edge. Often times the only warning of danger are the shrill sounds emitted by a small pocket radio, which change in pitch and intensity depending on the location of an enemy. With the use of the sensitive radio, we know something is hiding, but the exact location and number is never convincingly known. The option is to either run—which more often than not is the only sensible alternative—or unload ammunition from a shotgun, rifle, or hand gun, or, as a last resort, utilize one of a number of crude objects that can be found in some dark corner of the town. One of the more entertaining of these objects is the a delightfully gruesome fire axe, a great weapon for a one-creature confrontation. The game's artists have a penchant for making everything as brutally convincing as possible: a particularly graphic axe sequence involves a few perfectly landed blows to the meatiest part of a doctor's head, followed by a fatal blow as the victim writhes violently on the ground. If you love the explicit nature of horror, understand that no such sequence could possibly be better conceived on the PlayStation hardware.

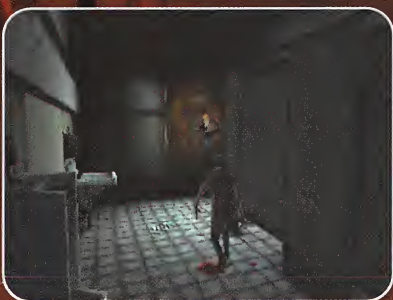
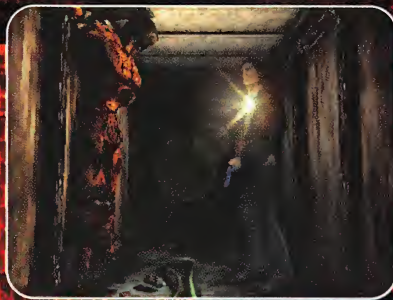
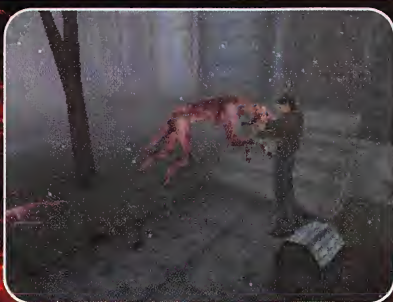
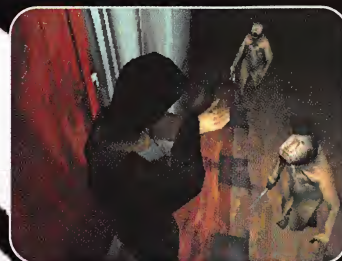
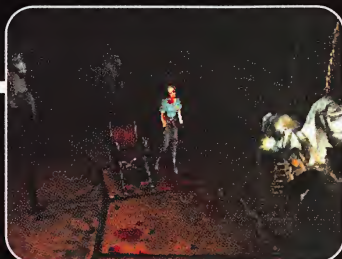
For all the blood and gore, for all the chilling images, *Silent Hill* moves to a different side of the spectrum, offering puzzles of immense originality and creativity to decipher. There are no blocks to move or switches to casually throw, but only challenging, entertaining riddles to solve and items to find in order to complete designated tasks.

When *Silent Hill* is analyzed, comparisons will, of course, be drawn to *Resident Evil* – and both games will be remembered as remarkable achievements. And wouldn't you know it, both games will also be remembered for their pathetic voice acting. *Silent Hill* suffers the video-game-acting blight, with a delivery of the story that swings from bad to awful, cutting into the game even more than the dialogue in *Resident Evil*.

But as much as *Silent Hill* is about what a story, about what we hear and do, it is just as much about what we

see. Its images are extraordinary, a triumph not so much in technical credit, but in boldness of spirit and imagination—the CG cut scenes are darkly beautiful—and there is an overwhelming sense that the designers were able to realize their vision of horror with little compromise. Part of the game's effect stems from its shocking, graphic nature. And part of its effect is the representation of imagination defying boundaries.





■ EXTRAORDINARY SIGHTS. SOUNDS THAT TRULY HAUNT
■ A RARE LEVEL OF TENSION WHEN CONFRONTING FOES

■ CREATIVE PUZZLES THAT MAKE US THINK
■ NO CG TO DATE CAN MATCH THIS DISPLAY OF EMOTION

REPUBLIC SAYS...

TECHNOLOGY WILL ALWAYS BE LIMITING, BUT WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST CURRENT GAME DESIGN, SILENT HILL'S DARING, STRIKING PRESENTATION IS VISIONARY.



T'AI FU

BY DAVE HALVERSON



*This tiger ain't pushin' sugar frosted flakes...
Dreamworks' T'ai Fu is kickin' tail - Kung Fu style!*

The name Activision is fast becoming synonymous with the phrase "great acquisition" – *T'ai Fu* has come together well. Dreamworks have finally found the right formula for their slick PS engine and have created a game that is sequel worthy and action-figure ready. By melding ancient Chinese themes with equal parts of action and adventure, the designers of *T'ai Fu* have created a character-driven game with all of the elements necessary for success in today's bulging PS market.

Orphaned at birth, T'ai Fu, now a teenager, has been raised by the peaceful Panda Clan. T'ai Fu's clan, the Tiger Clan, was destroyed long ago by the Dragon Master. His own kind extinct from infighting, the Dragon Master, aided by his army of snakes, is attempting to build a new clan by harnessing the Chi of his

fallen prey as he evokes rule over the remaining clans... Are you with me? When the Dragon Master brutalizes the gentle Pandas while hunting for T'ai, the young tiger decides it is time to embark on a journey of discovery and sets out on his own across China. His journey will ultimately take him through the regions of nine different clans: Snake, Mantis, Leopard, Monkey, Crane, Panda, Boar, Rat, and Dragon. With each clan, different terrain, enemies and, ultimately, techniques for Tai to use in battle are encountered. As T'ai wanders the landscape, striking down foes and traversing perilous expanses, each time he reaches a master he learns a new technique, which is then incorporated into the gameplay, causing it to constantly evolve. All the while, the music, a blend of Tibetan chants and mystic rhythms, helps set the stage for this



Dreamworks have finally put the graphics and the gameplay together. T'ai Fu is their best PS effort yet.



This cat's a mean lean kung-fu fighting machine!

thoroughly entertaining beat 'em up/platform/RPG hybrid. Smartly locking down the floating camera position (a mostly intelligent camera follows T'ai through the game), Dreamworks make the most of each and every inch of the lush polygonal landscapes, saturating them with vivid color and beautiful lighting.

The gameplay is comprised of a fairly unique blend of fighting, exploring, and platforming, punctuated by real-time cinematics. Each area is populated by the clan of its origin, and so T'ai constantly finds himself in new situations. Snakes are fast and can strike from long distances, while leopards and monkeys are quick and nimble attackers. The best way to deal with them all across the board is with T'ai's combo attack. By connecting three punches sequentially and then pressing triangle (while the icon is flashing), Tai unleashes a beautiful and very effective earthbound tremor. As the game progresses, similar feats are all explained to him as he emerges victorious and respected from his travels.

Which leads me to the game's voice act-

ing. For the most part, it is well-scripted and told. While some characters are a little too over the top, and some of T'ai's one-liners are a bit cheesy ("Your Kung Fu's no good!"), you can tell that the budget was there to give *T'ai Fu* every chance of becoming a hot license, should it capture a wide audience - which it has a good chance of doing. The whole ancient Chinese, honor-and-respect theme comes across extremely well, with a hint of comic relief but an overall aura of camaraderie and poetic justice. Besides a few haphazard jump alignments and getting accustomed to T'ai's wide stance during precision jumps, it's all good in *Tai Fu*. He's one bad pussy. ⚡



Throw down mean combos as you progress, learning and then attaining the skills of the masters. That cat's as fast as lightning!



■ ANCIENT CHINESE THEME IS A-VELY-GOOD
■ EXCELLENT LEVEL DESIGN. BRIGHT VIVID COLOR

■ REAL-TIME CUT SCENES ARE WELL PRODUCED
■ XLNT MUSIC FIT FOR A MONK. SPARK THE INCENSE, DUDE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THIS ONE REALLY CAME TOGETHER. A GREAT MIX OF FIGHTING, PLATFORMING, AND ADVENTURE. I THINK THIS TIGER'S GOT A FUTURE!

B+

VIGILANTE 8

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

The N64's only pure vehicular combat game is a must-buy for fans!



Surprise! *Vigilante 8* for the N64 is a vast improvement over the last preview copy. Almost every important element is either up to par with or exceeds the PS version. The N64 needs a quality vehicular combat game, so this is good news.

When I first laid eyes on the last early build of the N64 *Vigilante 8*, the frame rate was chugging in a big way. Any seasoned V8 player will tell you that the PS version looks great, demonstrating very impressive level construction and effects, but that the frame rate takes a dive when there's heavy-duty action on screen. That first version of the N64 V8 was much worse! Imagine! But now I'm in the midst of playing a smooth final game that shows off Luxoflux's lavishly designed terrain and vast horizons to great effect. In fact, the resolution in this version, when flipped up to "high" (using the 4-Meg Ram Pak), is richer than the PS version, and the textures have been cleaned up by the system's filtering abilities (the way it should be!). Unfortunately the depth-cued texture effect in the background looks a little too misty, whereas the PS version used more appealing tiling to draw in new textures. A moot point, considering the detailed mass of level in view at every moment. Best of all, the frame rate is even more consistent than the PS version in normal-res and about the same in high-res. Only in the four-player mode will you ever be affected by a low frame rate and reduced draw distance. In regards to split-screen gameplay, Luxoflux has created very playable Deathmatch modes, sure to rocket V8's replay value through the roof.

V8 on the N64 offers an exclusive new level, a bonus quest for "Y" the alien, improved graphics, fantastic customizable controls, and important multiplayer options. The only weak points are the inconsistent, SNES-quality soundtrack and chunky four-player mode. Otherwise, it's a great port! Now on to the Second Offense! 



Notice how the draw-in distance is exactly the same as the PS version. The resolution is high, and the reflective windows are intact too. Great!



■ EXCELLENT GRAPHICS ENGINE PORTS OVER WELL
■ LEVELS ARE COOL AS USUAL, BONUS LEVEL IS XLNT

■ SOUND EFFECTS ARE ALMOST PERFECT, MUSIC IS NEW
■ MULTIPLAYER MODES—THE STAR ATTRACTION OF V8 N64

REPUBLIC SAYS...

LUXOFLUX DAZZLE US ONCE AGAIN WITH THEIR EXTREME PROGRAMMING SKILLS. A FOUR-PLAYER MODE IN V8? HOW CAN IT BE?

B+



EXCLUSIVE N64 GOODIES

Tear up SUPER DREAMLAND 64!

Should you complete all of "Y" the Alien's levels in Quest mode, you'll be able to unlock the N64 exclusive bonus level, Super Dreamland 64! This colorful stage is reminiscent of Mario/Gex environments, complete with a giant, "evil castle" in its center. It also provides some interesting strategic elements in the multiplayer modes. "Y" has a longer quest, complicated by the fact that he has both Protect and Destroy missions, but his powerful special weapon melts through enemies. Good luck!



Tons of 4-PLAYER COMBAT!

N64 games often live or die by their four-player option...just imagine *Goldeneye* or *Starfox* without it! And although V8's 4P split-screen game is a tad framey (especially in high resolution – I'd avoid it if I were you), it includes several dedicated Deathmatch modes and good team-play options. Beware: hectic attacks filling all four split screens will reduce the perceived frame rate to sub-15. But it's still good fun to roar across these huge levels against three other people. It's also infinitely more addictive and replayable than *BattleTanx*, its closest competitor.



INTERVIEW WITH LUXOFLUX

GR: What were your initial impressions of the N64, and how have they changed since then?

Luxoflux: The first time I saw one of the V8 cars displayed on the N64 it looked so much more solid than on the Playstation – the filtering, anti-aliasing and perspective-correct textures removed a lot of artifacts. The increased processor speed was also a big relief for all our math-intensive physics.

At this point I have a love-hate relationship with the N64. In some ways it's clearly superior to the PS, but there were also some strange design decisions (like the texture-memory size) that ultimately limit it.

GR: Are you experiencing any major setbacks while converting the code, or is it just as portable as you have said in the past?

L: I don't remember ever saying it was portable! In fact, it was all very PlayStation-specific, because we had no idea we'd be putting it on any other platforms.

Initially, we had a lot of trouble getting the sound working properly. There was also a very hard-to-track-down intermittent bug that hung the whole machine, which had me tearing my hair out.

GR: In terms of memory, what is it like working with the cart as opposed to the PS' CD format and 2 megs of RAM?

L: Well the cart really has to be compared to the Playstation's 650MB CD, and in those terms it's very limiting. We certainly couldn't afford pre-rendered cut scenes or Redbook audio. The N64's 4meg of RAM is definitely a help over the Playstation, although a lot of that is lost to sound management and video memory, which the Playstation keeps separate.

GR: How have you managed to maintain similar draw-in distances to the PS version?

L: We used basically the same techniques as on the PS to draw into the distance, and it actually draws exactly as far as the PS version did.

GR: We've noticed there's no serious "fog," and no ugly filtering. In fact, the resolution seems to be very close to the PS version. How?

L: We moved the fog out as far as we could just to mask the draw-in point, so it's a total win over the PS version. We also automated the texture conversion to N64 to keep as much resolution as technically possible. This way we probably ended up with higher resolution textures

than we would have if we'd started making the models with the N64's limitations in mind.

GR: Have you been able to tweak the controls?

L: The controls had to be changed a lot to accommodate the N64's controller.

GR: Did you enhance any of the weapon effects?

L: On the PS we relied heavily on a clamped-add blending mode for explosions and weapons, which the Nintendo can't do. After a lot of experimentation, we came up with a scheme that allows a close approximation to this effect, which we don't think has been done before. The bilinear filtering also gives the explosions a more realistic, less pixelated appearance.

GR: As for the multiplayer modes, what was the most demanding task for the programmers?

L: As a technical challenge it really wasn't all that difficult: there were just a number of tweaks to accommodate more than two players. Logistically, we had to come up with modes of play that made sense with four players, and decide what we'd lose graphically to keep the frame rate up.

GR: How did you tackle the sound issue, in terms of content and quality?

L: We kept the theme song from the PS version because it was a strong identifying track. Everything else is a brand new composition. Alexander Brandon, who created the music for *Unreal* on the PC, is composing the songs for the N64 version using the Nintendo Sound Tools. Alex is very experienced in working with MIDI and other sample-based sequencers in low-memory environments, and he's doing some great work. This time, we will have more disco and rock, but also some cool funk and a '70s movie-score-inspired tune.

GR: Are you anxious to commence work on an original project based on your own designs?

L: Apart from the initial concept (which later changed), V8 was entirely Luxoflux's design and creation. Having said that, there are definitely other genres we'd like to try our hands at.



BLAST RADIUS

DEVELOPER: CAMDEN STUDIOS PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS AVAILABLE: NOW

Those who found *Colony Wars* a bit too involved in its missions and ongoing storyline might want to check out *Blast Radius*, Psynosis' more arcade-style deep-space shooter. Built around the slick engine used in *Colony Wars*, *BR* has a very similar feel with its streaking stars and vibrant effects, so it at least looks the part. And going *Colony Wars* one better, two-player modes are included here, though both the head-to-head and cooperative missions are available only through the PS' serial link function – there's no split screen.

Discounting the relative impact of the graphics for a moment, you'll find a competent 3D shooter here. Each action-oriented level throws many targets at you, both large and small, and there's no denying the inherent fun in blasting enemies in a vacuum. There are power-ups to collect from fallen ships and you can easily upgrade your selected craft (one of nine) in between missions.

Everything is in place with *Blast Radius*, but the end result is a bit dry. The game goes through its motions with aplomb, but it never grabs hold of you. Different intentions aside, *Colony Wars* is a much fuller experience. —K—



RAMPAGE 2: UNIVERSAL TOUR

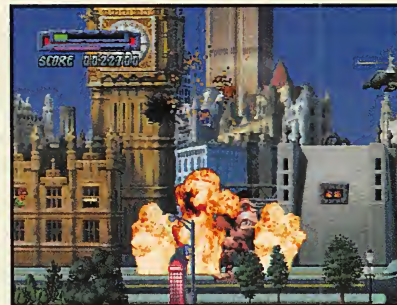
DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MIDWAY AVAILABLE: NOW

There are two categories of simple game design: Simple game design done well, and simple game design done not so well. *Rampage 2: Universal Tour* subscribes to the latter. It's not the idea behind *Rampage 2* that is flawed, but its execution.

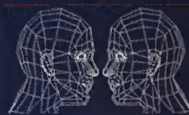
Touring the world as gargantuan monsters seeking to free captured comrades by leveling every city structure that gets in the way is a safe, simplistic, undeniably appealing concept, but the game's designers became too comfortable with the antiquated *Rampage* mechanics and obviously went through the development cycle with their creativity set on autopilot. While the 2D graphics have been casually enhanced with decent animation and a bevy of distinct cityscapes to level, the entire package feels so limp and uninspired.

Most of what is presented in *Rampage 2* will seem very familiar for fans of the earlier games in the series, and for those who are new to the *Rampage* mission, getting to grips with worldwide demolition via a punch and a kick will take less effort than writing the next Hollywood disaster script. This amazingly base course of gameplay is not inherently tragic, but the problems arise with *Rampage*'s inability to give us a vicarious sense of actually dropping planes out of the sky and crumbling massive city structures, and ultimately we feel detached from what is going on.

Tagging this new incarnation of *Rampage* with a "2" is stretching things a bit, but if you are really looking for excuses to play *Rampage* again, take note of such additions as harnessing tanks, travelling to outer space, and performing special moves unique to each of the five monsters. There's just so much more that could be done with such a propitious concept. The least they could have done was allow us to eat politicians in the Washington level. —K—



COUNTER + POINT



Beetle Adventure Racing • Paradigm • EA

As Reviewed By: Dave Halverson (page 65)

VAST REPLAYABILITY, FRESH CONCEPTS, GREAT VISUALS, EXCELLENT MUSIC, AND GREAT CONTROL IN TOW, BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING IS N64 RACING THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE.

A-



- THE UNIQUE PRESENCE OF THE BUG IS A POSITIVE FROM THE START.
- LONG TRACKS, EXCELLENT GRAPHICS, SMOOTH ENGINE, DIVERSE LOCALES. VERY NICE.

Brady Fiechter:

B+

BECAUSE IT'S THE FIRST GAME TO OFFER THE NEW BUG AS A VEHICLE, BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING IS IMMEDIATELY APPEALING. THE CONTROL SEEMS A BIT AWKWARD AT FIRST, BUT ONCE YOU LEARN TO DELICATELY MANIPULATE THESE TIGHT-HANDLING CARS, THE GAME BECOMES IMMENSELY PLAYABLE. ONE OF MY FAVORITE PARTS OF THE GAME ARE THE EXTREMELY LONG, MULTIPATHED COURSES THAT COIL THROUGH NICELY DETAILED LOCALES. THE ADDITION OF A SIMPLE POWER-UP SYSTEM COUPLED WITH SOMEWHAT FANTASY-EMBELLISHED SCENERY GIVES THE GAME AN ARCADE-QUALITY PUNCH FOR EVEN MORE DIVERSITY AND FUN. A SURPRISINGLY SOLID OFFERING FROM AN OBVIOUSLY TALENTED TEAM.



- THIS ONE-MAKE TITLE IS A BLAST OF A RACER WITH LOADS OF ALTERNATE ROUTES.
- WITHOUT USING THE RAM PACK, VISUALS ARE SURPRISINGLY SOLID AND ATTRACTIVE.

Mike Hobbs:

B+

VOLKSWAGEN'S SENSATIONAL NEW BEETLE NOW HAS ITS VERY OWN GAME. IN THIS ONE-MAKE RACE, YOU'LL PUT THE LITTLE GOLF-BASED CAR THROUGH SOME MEAN PACES AS YOU COLLECT NITROS AND BONUS BOXES IN LONG, WINDING COURSES THROUGH ALL KINDS OF WEATHER. DEVELOPED BY PARADIGM, BAR FEATURES A REALLY GOOD LOOKING ENGINE, WITH ALL MANNER OF COOL REFLECTION EFFECTS RUNNING OVER THE CAR'S BODY WORK. REALISTIC SHADOWS ARE CAST ALONG THE ROAD'S SURFACE, AND CARS CONVINCINGLY DIP IN AND OUT OF LIGHT AS THEY SLIP THROUGH TUNNELS AND OTHER SUN-BLOCKING OBJECTS. WITH ITS GREAT-LOOKING COURSES, IMPRESSIVE DRAW DISTANCE, AND MULTIPLE PATHS WITHIN EACH COURSE, BAR IS A SOLID AND FUN RACER.



Blast Radius • Camden Studios • Psygnosis

As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs (page 64)



A STRAIGHT ACTION TITLE BASED AROUND THE SLEEK COLONY WARS ENGINE WAS A PRETTY SAFE IDEA, AND BLAST RADIUS MAKES GOOD ON THE PROMISE OF A MORE ARCADE-STYLE EXPERIENCE. THE LINK-UP MODES ARE VERY WELCOME, THOUGH THE ONE-PLAYER GAME IS A LITTLE MONOTONOUS AFTER A WHILE. STILL, IT LOOKS GOOD.

B-



- GRAPHICS ARE GOOD, BUT THEY WERE BETTER IN CWV. FUNNY CONSIDERING IT'S PROBABLY THE SAME ENGINE.
- A DECENT IDEA COUPLED WITH BORING MISSIONS AND WORST OF ALL...BORING ACTION! ADEQUATE, THAT'S IT.

Mike Griffin:

C+

I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH CLONES. COMPANIES DO IT WITH SPORTS GAMES ALL THE TIME, AND IT'S BEEN PLAGUING THE PC FOR YEARS. I'D HATE TO SEE IT BECOME A HABIT IN CONSOLES. BLAST RADIUS IS A CLONE OF COLONY WARS THROUGH AND THROUGH. IT'S ALSO INFERIOR. I REALIZE IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE AN ARCADE-STYLE SHOOTER, BUT THE MISSIONS ARE TOO DEFINED FOR THIS TYPE OF GAME. A PROPER ARCADE SHOOTER SHOULD BE BASED ON EXCITING, ADRENALINE RUSHING SCENARIOS, BUT A SESSION OF BLAST RADIUS LEAVES YOU UNSATISFIED - SORT OF LIKE THAT FEELING YOU GET WHEN YOU WASTE A QUARTER ON A LAME ARCADE GAME (INSTEAD OF TRYING THE COOL-LOOKING ONE RIGHT BESIDE IT). BESIDES THIS, BLAST RADIUS ISN'T NEARLY AS INVOLVING, GRAPHICALLY IMPRESSIVE, OR CLASSY AS COLONY WARS VENGEANCE.



- IT IMMEDIATELY FEELS BETTER THAN COLONY WARS, FOCUSING ON SIMPLER SHOOT AND DESTROY.
- A GOOD-LOOKING ENGINE, BUT IT LOOKS TOO SIMILAR TO COLONY WARS; TIME FOR SOMETHING NEW.

Brady Fiechter:

C+

THOSE WHO FOUND COLONY WARS' REPRESENTATION OF OUTER SPACE STRONGLY CONVINCING WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DRAWN TO BLAST RADIUS: THE TWO GAMES SHARE MANY OF THE SAME VIBRANT EFFECTS AND DISTINCT VISUALS. WITH THE IMPRESSIVE 3D ENGINE EFFECTIVELY DOING ITS PART, BLAST RADIUS CHOOSES THE ARCADE-STYLE ROUTE TO COMPLETE THE EXPERIENCE. THE GAME IS ALL ABOUT SPEED AND EASE OF PLAY, HURLING YOU INTO THE SCINTILLATING EXPLOSIONS AND WEAPONS DISCHARGES WITH THE DRIVING TASK OF SEARCH AND DESTROY. CONTROLS ARE TIGHT, SOUNDS ARE RICH, EFFECTS ARE TYPICAL PSYGNOSIS FLASH, AND AS A COMPLETE PACKAGE, THE GAME DELIVERS ON ITS BASIC INTENTIONS.



Evolution • Sting • Sega

As Reviewed By: Mike Griffin (page 68)



I'VE ENJOYED MY TIME WITH EVOLUTION. IT'S A VERY PLAYABLE IMPORT TITLE, SO I HAD NO TROUBLE BUSTING THROUGH THE GAME. DESPITE THE APPARENT SIMPLICITY, THE RANDOM DUNGEONS ARE A LOT OF FUN TO PLAY FOR THE SAKE OF PROGRESSIVE LEVEL RAISING. I'M AWARDING THE "B" BECAUSE THIS GAME IS POLISHED AND ENJOYABLE.

B

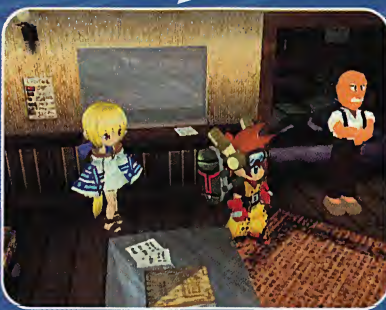


- THE MOST STUNNING GRAPHICS I'VE SEEN IN AN RPG. TOO BAD THEY'RE LIMITED TO ONE TOWN.
- THE WHOLE RANDOM DUNGEON GIG JUST DOESN'T DO IT FOR ME. IT'S LIKE FATAL LABYRINTH 128.

Dave Halverson:

B-

NOTHING HAS EVOLVED MUCH HERE BEYOND GRAPHIC PROWESS IN TERMS OF BENCHMARKS IN THE ROLE PLAYING GENRE, BUT THE VISUALS ALONE PROVIDE A MOTIVE TO WADE THROUGH COMPLEX EQUIPPING SCENARIOS (BECAUSE IT'S ALL IN JAPANESE) AND THE OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO KNOW WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON. THE ONE TOWN IS ABSOLUTELY FREAKING GORGEOUS AS ARE EACH AND EVERY INTERACTION WITHIN IT. THE BATTLES TOO - ESPECIALLY VS. THE IMPRESSIVE GUARDIANS - ARE A THING OF BEAUTY. EVOLUTION MADE ME WANT GRANDIA 2 SO BAD I CAN SMELL IT. IMAGINING THESE VISUALS, WITH AN OVERWORLD MAP AND MULTIPLE TOWNS... MAKES ME DIZZY. RPGS ARE ABOUT TO EVOLVE. EVOLUTION IS WORTHY OF AN AMERICAN RELEASE, WITHOUT A DOUBT.



- A VERY SOLID LITTLE RANDOM DUNGEON RPG WITH SMOOTH DC VISUALS.
- APPEALING CHARACTERS AND ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY WILL WIN YOU OVER.

Mike Hobbs:

B

I'M NOT A HUGE FAN OF RANDOM DUNGEON RPGS, BUT I MUST SAY I RATHER ENJOYED STING'S VIRGIN DREAMCAST EFFORT. FOR STARTERS, EVOLUTION LOOKS GREAT - SIMPLE, YET SATISFYINGLY SOLID AND WONDERFULLY TEXTURED. THE CHARACTERS ARE EMINENTLY APPEALING AND EASY TO GET INTO. ONCE IN THE DUNGEONS, I FOUND MYSELF ADDICTED TO THE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND GOOD-LOOKING BATTLES AND THE CONSTANT MOVEMENT THROUGH THE LEVELS. GREAT MUSIC IS ALSO A PART OF THIS GAME'S APPEAL, AS EACH DUNGEON HAS APPROPRIATE AND NICELY COMPOSED TUNES. SURE, EVOLUTION MAY BE A LITTLE BASIC IN THE END WITH ONLY ONE TOWN, BUT IT HAS CHARM AND IS VERY WELL EXECUTED. WHAT'S MORE, IT CAN BE PLAYED IN ITS NATIVE JAPANESE WITH NO SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS.



COUNTER + POINT



Legend of Legaia • contrail • SCE

As Reviewed By: Grady Fiechter (page 58)



When Legend of Legaia plays its strong suits — excellent music and an innovative, always-entertaining battle system — it packs sizeable enjoyment. But an overly predictable and linear story and uninspired, muddled graphics undermine the positives.



- GOTTA LOVE THAT BATTLE SYSTEM; IT'S A VERY ORIGINAL CONCEPT THAT I ENJOY.
- THE STORY'S A LITTLE WEAK, BUT IT'S NOT OFFENSIVELY BORING OR RIDICULOUS.

Mike Griffin:

B

I'M NOT EXACTLY THRILLED WITH LOL'S STORY. FORTUNATELY I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FAN OF RAW PLAY-MECHANICS IN RPGS. CALL ME CRAZY, BUT I LOVE TO RAISE MY CHARACTER'S LEVELS FOR HOURS AT A TIME. IT'S A SATISFYING PROCESS. IN LEGAIA, THE BATTLES ARE FUN AND IMMEDIATELY REWARDING. BASED ON STYLISH MARTIAL ARTS, THE CHARACTER ANIMATION (AND CONTACT WITH ENEMIES) IS TOTALLY EXCITING. AND SINCE YOUR CHARACTERS ARE CONSTANTLY LEARNING MORE DESTRUCTIVE MOVES, THE MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE PLAYING IS SECURED. I'LL ADMIT THAT IF THE BATTLE SYSTEM SHARED THE SPOTLIGHT WITH AN EPIC QUEST AND GORGEOUS 3D ENGINE, LEGAIA MIGHT BE AN A TITLE, BUT AS IS, IT'S MERELY A GOOD RPG WITH A GREAT NOVELTY.



- THE INNOVATIVE AND FUN COMBAT SYSTEM HOOKS YOU INITIALLY...
- BUT THE LAME STORY AND LESS THAN STELLAR VISUALS KEEP YOU FROM STICKING WITH IT.

Mike Hobbs:

C+

WITH A GENRE NEARLY OVERFLOWING WITH GREATNESS, A NEW RPG NEEDS TO BE PRETTY SPECTACULAR TO SUCCEED, AND SONY'S LEGAIA ONLY MAKES IT PART OF THE WAY THERE. THERE IS CERTAINLY INNOVATION IN ITS COMBAT SYSTEM WITH ITS USER-DEFINED COMBOS AND QUICK ATTACKS, BUT THIS IS THE LONE STANDOUT FEATURE HERE. THE STORY IS QUITE WEAK, UNACCEPTABLY SO FOR AN RPG, AND THE GRAPHICS SUFFER FROM A CASE OF FIRST-GENERATION BLUES. THIS IS EXACERBATED BY A COLOR PALETTE THAT I SIMPLY FIND UNATTRACTIVE. INSTEAD OF LUSH, INVOLVING COLORS, LOL HAS DARK, BASIC COLORS AND ART THAT DOES LITTLE TO ENHANCE ITS ALREADY SHAKY ENGINE. COULD HAVE BEEN A LOT BETTER.



Mario Party • Nintendo • Nintendo

As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs (page 59)



With Mario Party, Nintendo deliver a hugely fun four player board game with loads of great mini-games. While it's true that the one player game is a bit dull and pointless (who wants to sit through three computer turns), the four player experience is second to none. I GOTTA WIN!



- ABSOLUTELY THE BEST MULTIPLAYER FUN AROUND.
- PRETTY LIMITED FOR ONE BLOKE ON HIS OWN.

Bryn Williams:

B

MARIO AND BLOKES MAKE A RATHER PLEASANT SURPRISE APPEARANCE IN THE FORM OF THIS ENJOYABLE FOUR-PLAYER PARTY EXTRAVAGANZA. INSTANTLY CLASSIC NINTENDO FUN IS A TOP PRIORITY WITH THIS BEAUTY, AND WHEN FOUR PEOPLE GET STUCK INTO THOSE CRAZY MINI-GAMES, TIME SEEMS TO BE SUCKED OUT OF YOUR LIFE. WHILE NOT AS MUCH FUN IN SINGLE-PLAYER MODE, MARIO PARTY IS ONE OF THOSE GAMES THAT SHOULD BE ENJOYED IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS, AND THIS MAKES IT AN ESSENTIAL PURCHASE. UNLESS YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DESIRE TO HAVE ANY FUN, OR IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS. SUCKA!



- IT'S A PERFECT LITTLE BOARD GAME ON YOUR N64 STARRING THE COOLEST NINTENDO GREATS.
- SUPER-SIMPLE GAMEPLAY FOR PARTIES, AND A NICE SINGLE-PLAYER GAME TO BOOT.

Mike Griffin:

B

MARIO PARTY HAS VERY BASIC GRAPHICS AND SOUND. THIS GAME COULD HAVE BEEN INFINITELY MORE PLEASING TO LOOK AT AND LISTEN TO. THIS LOW POINT, HOWEVER, DOESN'T DETRACT FROM THE GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE WHATSOEVER. MP IS PURE, UNADULTERATED, AND UNIVERSAL MULTIPLAYER JOY. IF YOU ENJOY PLAYING GOOD BOARD GAMES, YOU'LL LOVE MARIO PARTY. EACH OF THE BOARDS HAS PLENTY OF PITFALLS AND BONUSES, AND EACH ROUND ENDS WITH ONE OF 56 COOL LITTLE MULTIPLAYER MINI-GAMES. THEY'RE INCREDIBLY SIMPLE GAMES, BUT THE FEELING OF 100% INNOCENT FUN THAT THESE AWESOME CHARACTERS EVOKE IS UNMATCHED. WHEN YOU SEE DK IN THE BOWSER SUIT GETTING POUNDED BY HAMMER-TOTTING MARIO, YOSHI, AND WARIO, YOU'VE JUST GOTTA CRACK A SMILE. GOOD FUN!



Rollcage • ATD • Psygnosis

As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs (page 62)



ROLLCAGE TRIES SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND MOSTLY SUCCEEDS. RACING ALONG WALLS AND CEILINGS CAN BE A THRILLING, THOUGH SOMETIMES OUT OF CONTROL EXPERIENCE. IT CAN BE TAMED, HOWEVER, AND THE BIG-NAME SOUNDTRACK PROVIDES PLENTY OF AURAL STIMULATION TO ACCOMPANY THE REQUISITE PSYGNOSIS FLASH.



- THE FREEDOM TO ROAM UP WALLS AND AROUND TUNNELS MAKES FOR AN ALTOGETHER UNIQUE EXPERIENCE.
- PRECISION CONTROLS, A STURDY ENGINE, AND GREAT MUSIC.

Dave Halverson:

B

ONCE YOU REALIZE THAT THE WAY TO CONTROL THIS PRECISION RACER IS DELICATELY WITH SMALL INCREMENTAL STEERING TAPS ON THE ANALOG, IT'S ALL GOOD. ATD, THE CREATORS OF (DRUM ROLL PLEASE) CYBERMORPH, HAVE CRAFTED NOT ONLY A UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL RACING GAME BUT AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE AROUND IT, ALONG WITH A QUIVER OF TRULY ORIGINAL WEAPONS. THEY ARE TO BE COMMANDED FOR BREATHING FRESH AIR IN TO THE STALE FUTURISTIC RACING CATEGORY. GREAT MUSIC, INSPIRED VISUALS, AND ONE HELLUVA SOLID ENGINE MAKE THIS AN ALL AROUND MEMORABLE RACER.

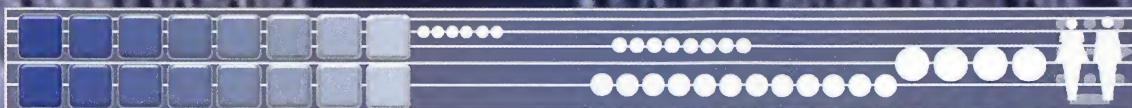


- AWESOME SENSE OF SPEED DESPITE THE SLIGHTLY CHUNKY ENGINE.
- THE BIG NAME SOUNDTRACK? I PRAISE YOU LIKE I SHOULD...

Mike Griffin

B

I HAVE A GOOD TIME WITH ROLL CAGE EVERY TIME I TURN IT ON. I REALLY APPRECIATE THE TRACKS (ALTHOUGH THEY'RE TOO SHORT) BECAUSE THEY CONSTANTLY ENCOURAGE THE GAME'S UNIQUE PLAY-MECHANICS: BLOWING THE \$#@% OUT OF TRACKSIDE OBJECTS AND DRIVING OVER TERRAIN AT EVERY POSSIBLE ANGLE. THE TRACKS ARE WIDE OPEN TOO, WITH A FEW INTERESTING SHORTCUTS TUCKED AWAY HERE AND THERE, SO THERE'S DEFINITELY ROOM FOR A LITTLE CREATIVE RACING STRATEGY. GRAPHICALLY, RC SUFFERS A LITTLE DUE TO SOME CHUNKY RENDERING OF THE TRACK OFF IN THE DISTANCE, BUT THE VERY FACT THAT YOU CAN SEE SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU WITHOUT FOG OR POP-UP MAKES UP FOR THE SHORTCOMING. THE TOUCHY CONTROLS WILL TAKE SOME PRACTICE.



Silent Hill • Konami • Konami

As Reviewed By: Grady Jechter (page 65)

Silent Hill is meant to shock us, entertain us, charge us with a visceral rush, and it succeeds on all accounts. As much as Silent Hill is about what we do, it is just as much about what we see. Its images are extraordinary, a triumph not so much in technical credit, but in boldness of spirit and imagination.

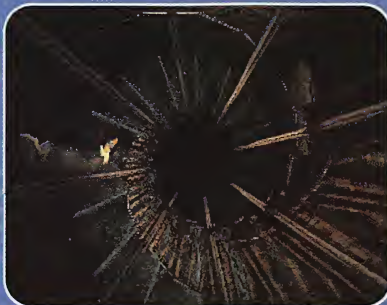


- Silent Hill is strong proof that this style of game can work in 3D.
- Control and camera angles could have been better.

Dave Rees

A-

I WAS NEVER ONE TO FEAR THE DARK, BUT WHILE EXPERIENCING KONAMI'S SILENT HILL, TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS AT NIGHT CAUSED NIGHTMARISH HALLUCINATIONS. I FEAR THE DAY THAT MY POWER GOES OUT... HAVING TO NAVIGATE AN UNLIT ENVIRONMENT WITH A FLASHLIGHT, OUTDOOR OR OTHERWISE, WOULD SURELY GIVE RISE TO DEMONS. DISEASED PYGMIES WOULD SHAMBLE TOWARDS ME AND THEN LUNGE AT MY KNEES WITH RAZOR-SHARP KNIVES. SKINLESS HUMANOIDS WOULD LEAP AT ME AND TEAR INTO MY NECK WITH THEIR ROTTING SHARP TEETH. ONCE IT ARRIVES, FEAR IS INESCAPABLE, AS IS THE COLD, CREEPY, EVIL TOWN OF SILENT HILL.



- MAKE NO MISTAKES: THIS GAME IS TRULY CREEPY.



- RESIDENT EVIL WAS LIKE A CARTOON WHEN COMPARED TO THESE OMINOUS ENVIRONMENTS.

Eric Pratte

A-

DARK, FOREBODING, AND OH SO CREEPY, SILENT HILL CASTS A DEADLY SHADOW ON THE LIKES OF RESIDENT EVIL 2. KONAMI HAS TAKEN THE ATMOSPHERIC BRILLIANCE OF MGS AND STUFFED IT INTO A SMALL OUT-OF-THE-WAY TOURIST TRAP. MURKY FOG, MANIACAL MUSIC, DARK DEMONIC DUNGEONS, AND MANY MORE MONSTERS THAN BULLETS. THIS FORCES YOU TO DO TWO THINGS AGAINST YOUR BETTER JUDGEMENT: RUN THROUGH IN TERRIFYING STRUCTURES...EXCEPT FOR ZOMBIE NURSES AND FESTERING HOUNDS, AND DO THIS IN THE PITCH BLACK OF AN AFTERNOON IN SILENT HILL. NEVER HAVE I HAD TO STOP PLAYING A GAME DUE TO THE FEAR OF PLAYING ANOTHER MINUTE. THAT IS MY HIGHEST ENDORSEMENT FOR THIS HORRIFIC VIDEO EPIC.



Sega Rally 2 • Sega • Sega

As Reviewed By: David S.J. Hodgson (page 64)

THE POWER OF THE DREAMCAST (AND INSANE ALL-NIGHT CODING) HAVE PRODUCED AN EMINENTLY PLAYABLE ARCADE CONVERSION. THERE IS A BIT OF CHUG TO CONTENT WITH TO BE SURE, BUT IT NEVER SERIOUSLY HAMPERES THE GAMEPLAY. THE CONTROL IS PERFECTION, AND THE WEALTH OF NEW CARS GIVES IT EVEN MORE REPLAYABILITY.



- INCREDIBLE GRAPHICS, BRILLIANT CONTROL, AND TONS OF NEW CARS HIGHLIGHT THIS CONVERSION.
- OCCASIONAL FRAME RATE DROPS KEEPS IT FROM PERFECTION.

Mike Hobbs

A-

SEGA'S ARCADE-GAME-DESIGN GENIUS MAKES ITSELF KNOWN WITH A VENGEANCE IN SEGA RALLY 2. THIS IS EASILY ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING CONSOLE RACERS I'VE EVER PLAYED. THIS HAS PARTLY TO DO WITH THE HIGH LEVEL OF GRAPHICS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE POWER OF DREAMCAST, BUT IT HAS EVEN MORE TO DO WITH THE COURSE DESIGN AND SENSATION OF SPEED AS YOU BOUND OVER BRIDGES AND SWEEP AROUND CORNERS, HANGING YOUR CAR OUT TO THE EXTREME EDGE. YES, THE GAME DOES CHUG EVERY NOW AND AGAIN, BUT THE PERFECT CONTROL AND ADDITIONS TO THE DC VERSION NEGATE THIS QUITE WELL. YOU WON'T FIND A MORE EXCITING HOME RACER FROM ANYONE BUT NAMCO.



- MADNESS, ABSOLUTE GRAPHICAL MADNESS! I'M STILL BLOWN AWAY BY THIS RESOLUTION ON A CONSOLE.
- STUNNING, SUPER-COOL CONTROL STYLE MAKES RALLY 2 THE DEFINITIVE HOME RACING GAME FOR ME...

Mike Griffin

A-

YEAH YEAH, SO IT CHUGS A BIT. THE ONLY REASON YOU'LL HEAR THE ANAL GRIPING IS BECAUSE THIS GORGEOUS BEAST DROPS FROM 60FPS TO THE 30 RANGE, AND THAT PLAYS HAVOC WITH YOUR EYEBALLS. ANYWAY, THE GRAPHICS ARE STILL INSANELY DETAILED AND APPEALING. THE CARS ARE STUNNING AND THE WIDE TRACKS ARE CAKED WITH EXTRA POLYS HERE AND THERE. IT'S REALLY THE GAMEPLAY THAT SHINES HERE, THOUGH. THE FEELING YOU GET WHEN YOU'RE COUNTER STEERING AND ADJUSTING TO DIFFERENT TERRAIN IS JUST AMAZING. THE DC'S LITTLE STICK DOES A FINE JOB HANDLING THE ACTION, TOO, YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW. FINALLY, THE DC-SPECIFIC TRACKS AND CARS ARE AWESOME. SO...ANY WEAK ENDS BESIDES THE MINUTELY TROUBLED GRAPHICS? SOME CHEESY TUNES, MAYBE, BUT THAT'S IT!



Vigilante 8 • Luxoflux • Activision

As Reviewed By: Mike Griffin (page 68)

THIS IS MORE THAN A SIMPLE CONVERSION! IT IS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY. THE FRAME RATE IN ONE-PLAYER MODE IS BETTER, THE RES (WITH RAMPAK) IS HIGHER, AND THERE ARE MULTIPLAYER MODES GALORE. ON THIS SYSTEM, IN THIS GENRE, V8 IS LITERALLY ALL YOU NEED. TOO BAD THE MUSIC'S MOSTLY PORN-TASTIC...



- THE ONLY CAR-BASED VEHICULAR COMBAT GAME ON N64, AND IT'S A GOOD ONE.
- THE TUNES COULD USE A LITTLE WORK IN THE SOUND-QUALITY DEPARTMENT.

Mike Hobbs

B

WHILE THE PLAYSTATION HAS A WEALTH OF TITLES IN THE VEHICULAR COMBAT GENRE, THE N64 HAS BASICALLY NOTHING IN THIS CATEGORY, SAVE FOR THIS, LUXOFLUX'S EXCELLENT CONVERSION OF V8. THE FRAME RATE REMAINS VERY RESPECTABLE, AND WITH THE RAM PAK, THE HIGH-RES SHEEN IS AN ADDED BONUS. AS FAR AS ENHANCEMENTS GO, THIS VERSION FEATURES A COOL NEW LEVEL, BETTER-LOOKING EXPLOSIONS, AND MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, A DECENT FOUR-PLAYER SPLIT SCREEN. OUTSIDE OF THESE ADDITIONS, IT'S THE SAME OLD V8, AND IN THIS SOFTWARE DEFICIENT CATEGORY, THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. IF ONLY MORE COULD HAVE BEEN DONE WITH THE MUSIC...



- THE BEST PS TO N64 PORT YET BY A LONG SHOT
- WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? BESIDES THE DRAW IN, EVERYTHING YOU COULD POSSIBLY WISH FOR IN VEHICULAR COMBAT IS RIGHT HERE.

Dave Halverson

B

THERE'S A LOT TO LIKE ABOUT VIGILANTE 8 ON THE NINTENDO 64, PAK IN TOW. GOOTIN' PHYSICS, EXCELLENT CONTROL, A NICE QUIVER OF COMBATANTS, AND ALTHOUGH RESERVED TO YOUR IMMEDIATE VICINITY, THE TEXTURES LOOK DANDY AS WELL. THE GAME'S GOT LEGS, TOO - REALLY HAIRY ONES. ONCE YOU OPEN UP THE ALIEN, THE LITTLE GREENY'S GOT HIS OWN QUEST AND BEYOND THAT LIES THE FRUTOPIA OF NINTENDO 64 LAND! THERE'S A SHOT OF PORN IN THE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT, BUT OVERALL THIS IS A RAGIN' VEHICULAR BRAWLER.



One of the most impressive elements of next-generation sports titles is their often spectacular presentation. As developers improve their 3D skills and add complex motion capture, sports games are starting to look incredibly good.

Here we have Konami's long awaited update to their classic NES hockey title, *Blades of Steel*. Fully realized 3D action, including the bad-ass fights that *BOS* was and is known for, have been integrated into this potentially powerful new version. We also enjoyed the polished TV-style presentation of *BOS 99*. Konami have included a cool pre-game introduction filled with tracking multi-colored spotlights and cheering crowd members wearing home-team sweaters. It's short, but it really adds to the NHL experience. In addition, the sounds of *BOS 99* are very good, with ultra-clear commentary and good rink/stadium effects.

Our initial impressions of the gameplay in *BOS 99* were a little mixed. First, the obvious: The control is slightly sluggish and collisions aren't quite on the money. Also, there's a noticeable motion lag when attempting to change directions (it isn't just the effect of skating), and players tend to get stuck in and around the net. Of course all of this will likely be buttoned up before the game ships in March. Otherwise, *Blades of Steel 99* is looking very good. We'll have a review in the May GRS.



NHL BLADES OF STEEL 99



developer/publisher: Konami available: March



Ubi Soft's ubiquitous *Monaco GP 2* is set to debut on PlayStation, providing pseudo F-1 thrills as an alternative of sorts to Psygnosis' popular series. While Ubi's title features 16 real-life approximations of grand prix courses from across the globe, you'll not find the actual teams or drivers from the sport. While this may make the game less attractive to some, those who don't know Mika Hakkinen from Ronald McDonald can look forward to a game that captures the basic look and feel of Formula 1 without the expensive and restrictive license. And what it loses in authenticity over Psygnosis' titles, *Monaco GP 2* makes up for somewhat in its appearance. Obviously, the look is downgraded from its PC counterpart and upcoming Dreamcast version, but you'll find a smoother looking, less glitchy environment than Psygnosis and Visual Science's *Formula 1 98*.

In the features department, *Monaco GP 2* is rich. In addition to Arcade and the more sim-like Championship modes, four-player support will be available using the PS' serial link. And like the PC version, you'll have a good deal of control over each car's performance characteristics.

Monaco GP 2 is due out soon, and we'll be bringing you a review forthwith.

MONACO GP 2

developer/publisher: ubisoft available: spring



One of the hapless faithful who has followed the Cubs through one struggling season after another, I was pleasantly rewarded this year with a great fight for the playoffs and, of course, Sosa's remarkable MVP season. This was just the type of rebirth baseball needed, and, if we're lucky, video game designers will harvest some of the magic that has finally returned to the great game.

If the string of recent releases is anything to go by, labeling a game of video baseball "great" is going to be awhile. With *Bottom of the 9th*, Konami are doing all they can to make a game that is actually worth playing again.

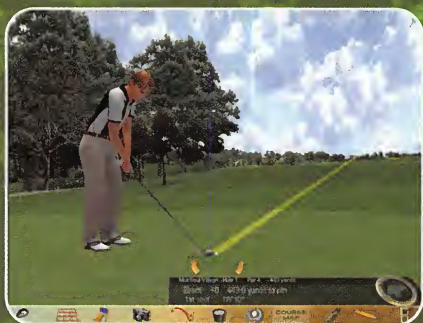
Simplicity seems to be the drawing card of *Bottom of the 9th*: control schemes are extremely basic, pitching is fast and intuitive, and fielding and running the bases is as familiar as you could possibly get.

It's starting to get to the point where little differentiates one baseball game from another, but Konami are leaning towards unique game modes and dynamic camera movements to move *Bottom of the 9th* to the front of the crowd.



BOTTOM OF THE NINTH

developer/publisher: konami available: now



One thing *Jack Nicklaus Golf* is certainly not short on is features. Played out over 10 courses including the famous Hualalai and Lake Las Vegas locales, this ambitious golf game spans the globe to attempt to ensure the most authentic representation of the sport possible.

Complete control is given over the camera, allowing you to view every possible angle in order to make the most precise shots to contend with the game's challenging physics model. Once the typical swing meter is mas-

tered and the lay of the courses become more intuitive, the game can be opened up for a new set of challenges through an editor option.

In an effort to bring much-needed visual flair to the golf genre, the designers have used professional players to motion capture the swings, and each golfer is comprised of as many as 2000 polygons. Match this with ambient sound touches and enhanced AI and swing meters, and *Jack Nicklaus Golf* just might have what it takes to play another golf game – which is saying a lot.

SPORTS: ACTIVATED



JACK NICKLAUS GOLF



developer/publisher: accolade available: spring

With the start of 1999 ushering in a new year full of incredible Naomi arcade titles, the once all-powerful Model 3 has reached the end of its life. However, it's not going to fade away without one last burst of

action. Thanks to Sega, some of last year's greatest titles are back again and better than ever with all-new stages, improved features and enhanced gameplay. So let's take a look at what's on offer!

DAYTONA USA 2 POWER EDITION (C) SEGA 1994, 1998

Daytona USA 2 was the only racing game last year to give *Sega Rally 2* a run for its money. With its use of the Step 2 board, it pushed the hardware more than any other game and was a stunning example of what the Model 3 was capable of doing. The new *Power Edition* sequel is true to its name, with every car, course, crash and circuit powered up even higher than before to further your driving excitement. The main new features include the addition of a new Challenge Course, where you can drive through a special track consisting of the three old courses put together. The order goes from Expert to Advanced to Beginner. Because this massive nine-mile course is so long, you only race around it once! Next, the legendary player car HORNET of *Daytona USA* is back; it even drives with the same feeling. Finally, the Model 3 can be connected to a special PC (the Internet Tournament System) which will then gather lap times from all over the country to give a national ranking.



ARCADE

VIRTUA STRIKER 2 VERSION '99 (C) SEGA 1994, 1998 (C) 1996 JFA

Currently still number one in the Japanese arcade ranking charts, this is a game that surprised many as being one of the major hits of last year. Although one of the first Model 3 games released, it has proven itself capable of breaking the trend of quick overnight hits by establishing itself as a long-term investment for many operators. More than anything else, its simple but realistic gameplay has attracted many new people into the arcade. Instead of relying simply on core users, the emphasis on a general audience has helped to sustain its life span.

The biggest difference in the new addition is that Sega have analyzed the data taken from various international matches during 1998 (including the World Cup), and based on this, they have altered the team's formation and player statistics accordingly. Other changes include three new teams – Jamaica, Chile and Australia (now making a total of 27 teams) – and two new stadiums. Various new formations and tactics have also been improved to give you even more freedom during the game.





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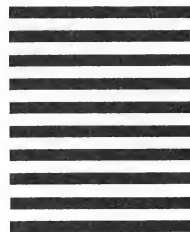
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**THAT'S A
STEAL!**

SPIKEOUT FINAL EDITION (C) SEGA 1998, 1999

The ground-breaking multiplayer fighting game that took the arcade by storm last year is back with enough updates to almost warrant calling it a sequel. Two huge new stages, – Spiker's Camp and Shipyard – have been added, giving you a massive five stages and 40 areas to battle across.

The stages now go like this: First – Spiker's Camp; Second – Diesel Town; Third – Astro Mall or Shipyard and, finally, Imperial Opera. Lending the game even greater appeal, the old stages have been redone to compliment the new areas. So, for example, it now rains when you are in Diesel Town.

Continuing with the list of improvements, a wide variety of new features have been added to the game as well. In particular, the fighting itself has been made more dramatic by improving the various bosses' A.I. algorithms to enhance their intelligence and resilience. In return, your characters have been imbued with a number of hidden fight commands.

Two new extra elements added to *Spikeout* are the Rush mode and bonus stages. The Rush mode is activated by pressing the S, B, C and Start Buttons all at the same time. You then have just three minutes to accumulate the highest score possible against your fellow players. The bonus stage appears at three points in the game and allows you a chance to aim for the high score.



CORNER

SEGA ARCADE CONTEST!

In order to celebrate all these new editions, Sega's arcade section has given us some great prizes to give away to some lucky readers! There are three competitions, one for each of the games. The prizes are different for each one. We have ten T-shirts for *Daytona 2*, five coats for *Virtua Striker 2*, and three music LPs for *Spikeout*. Each competition entry must be sent in on a postcard clearly marked with which competition you wish to enter. You can enter them all if you wish to, but you'll need to send in three different entries on three different cards. The rules are the same for all three competitions. Simply write the correct answers to the following questions on a postcard and send them to Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 111, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

1. Who is the producer of the current version?
2. Which AM team is responsible for the current version?
3. What is the full name of the last version?
4. In which month was the last version released in Japan?
5. What makes this game better than other games in the same genre?



world republic

[i] Here it is: Our first definitive Dreamcast RPG review. As a Dungeon RPG, *Evolution* is easily one of the best you've ever seen or played. It also provides something even more important: another genre has been addressed on DC, just as Sega Rally 2 (featured this month) fills the racing gap. Joining these in-depth DC feature reviews are Bloody Roar 2, the trippy shooter Internal Section, and a feast of others.

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

World Republic Review • developer/publisher Sting • available in japan now

evolution



The DC's first RPG has arrived!

A good RPG should be a satisfying, exhausting ordeal. It should evoke some sense of progressive accomplishment after each and every hour of gameplay, and it should be able to isolate you for long stretches of time in complete, guiltless immersion.

I just capped off a big weekend with Sting's *Evolution*, the first "true" RPG to hit the Dreamcast. *Evolution* has led me through some very memorable late nights, easily destroying any non-gaming-related plans I may have had. Twenty hours of dungeon exploration have passed, and I do indeed find myself exhausted and almost completely satisfied.

If you're a well-honed RPG player, you'll notice right away that *Evolution* fulfills several of the requirements of the genre. The characters (young Mag especially) are detailed and appealing, with completely enveloped high-res 3D design and fully animated facial expression and personalities. The menus are easily understood and quickly memorized, and the L & R-controlled camera rotates rich overhead environments perfectly. To top it off, battles load almost instantly and quality chip music is matched amazingly well to the happiness of the town, the flurry of battle, and the atmospheric gloom of the dungeons.

RANDOM DUNGEON EXPLORATION

Evolution's defining characteristic is its Randomly Generated Dungeon gameplay. The course of the game goes as follows: You move from one main town to a dungeon level, you return to this town, shop and talk, then depart for another dungeon. There are no other towns, and no locations to travel to by traditional means – i.e., walking across a world map. Despite this apparent limitation,



hardcore RPG players (who furiously pursue character levels, new magic, and sky-high HPs) will totally enjoy the process of taming and maiming each dungeon. The randomly generated layouts are large, surprisingly detailed and, well, infinitely varied. An auto-map tracks every step you take, so it's basically impossible to get lost; you only explore further, pushing onwards through over a dozen floors, locating valuable treasure, discovering traps...and, of course, fighting!

BATTLES

Battles play a key role in *Evolution*, as is the case with most Randomly Generated Dungeon games. Since the layouts are never set in stone, there are no puzzles to solve or hidden passageway to locate. Progression is therefore measured through the boosting of characters and the eventual defeat of dungeon bosses. The level-up system matches you against identical or lower-leveled creatures in the first few floors of a dungeon, and should you avoid these battles and climb to higher floors the creature levels will eventually surpass your own. This can result in crushing damage to your inferior party. In other words, it's a good idea to "beat" the floors as you progress (by slaughtering as many enemies as possible) to keep your character levels up to par. This can be done very efficiently thanks to a fair system of collision that Sting has employed: When approaching a dungeon creature, you always have the option to run your character into it from behind, allowing you a surprise attack and many rounds of free hits once the battle begins. You might have to be patient, keeping patrolling enemies in check from a short distance away, but if you strike their backsides (ahem) the surprise attack is secured.

(Left) Here are some examples of dungeons. You can see that each has a different motif/theme, such as mayan, volcano, grotto, etc. There are nice little touches of detail here and there, and each dungeon changes background style once you reach upper floors. Also, check out the 3D enemies (perfectly visible, easily attacked!), and the auto-map.



電気製品





Although simplistic in design, the battle system is highly efficient. Each character has many super-powerful Psyflame attacks like Mag's (Left).



Playing this way most of the time (all the way up through 16-plus floor dungeons) may seem overtly methodical, but if you don't build your levels, the awesome final floor bosses will destroy you. Thankfully, there's an in-dungeon save, available when you reach the stairs to the next level, and there are dungeon escape teleports peppered throughout the complex.

Three points you should bear in mind regarding the use of

in-dungeon saves: (1) There's only one slot for this type of save game per VMS. (2) In tune with the Randomized Dungeon system, enemy creature levels will re-adjust to be equal to or greater than your own level once you load the save. (3) These saves can only be used one at a time. Even if things are going badly after you've resumed an in-dungeon save, never reset the game to load the same floor and try again. Once you load this type of save file it is totally erased from memory. You always need to get to a new save spot (the next floor) before leaving the game. The only opportunity to log a normal save



(Top) It's Society's fault, man! This is where all your adventures begin, and it's also where you'll be depositing (and identifying) all of the important items located in the dungeons. (Below) These are the other lush, high-res locations within the walls of Pannam, Evolution's one and only town. To be fair, everything you need, including healing items and Psyflame upgrades, can be found right here.

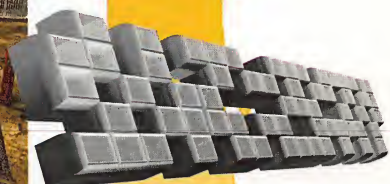
game (with multiple slots and complete security) comes on the final floor, so be careful. I've been burned a few times myself, forced to use my last normal save game (in town) before the dungeon started, losing five big levels in the process, because of the fragile in-dungeon save.

HIGH ADVENTURE?

Details! Always so many to tackle with an import RPG! That's why it's time to finally take a look at the quest itself. In *Evolution*, your character is looking for his adventurer parents, and that's the motivation behind the dungeon exploration. As Mag looks for his folks in the many different ruins, he encounters the Army and soon discovers that they are searching the ruins for some form of ancient artifact. Mmn...Mag's parents may have been searching for the same treasure. As you return from successful dungeon forays you'll be greeted by gorgeous real-time cut scenes, a side quest or two, and you'll be able to enlist a new third-party member, register for a new quest at the agency, and identify rare items. The story breaks are encouraging and the many tasks are nice, but in truth, anything non-dungeon related comprises no more than 10 percent of this game.

Evolution is a great first-generation DC title. Sting told us that they could have added a lot to the game if they had more time (it's so true), but thankfully they chose to tightly button-up the game in its present state. This is an extremely playable, addictive and satisfying dungeon RPG experience. I hope to see it on these shores in time for the DC launch!

World Republic says "Evolution provides simple yet involving dungeon RPG gameplay, and despite certain limitations, it is an extremely polished and playable game." B



Angeles
ンゼルス

Tokyo
東京



[i] Last month, we had a chance to speak with Sting regarding *Evolution*, their first offering for the Dreamcast. That was just the beginning. We resumed the interview after completing the game in order to delve deep into its development. Join us, won't you, for part two of this in-depth interview...

World Republic Interview • developer/publisher **Sting** • available in Japan now

team evolution: 2



Team Evolution lines up for the Republic (from left to right): Mr. Yoshihisa Tomita (Director), Mr. Kenjiro Hira (Programmer), Mr. Nobuhiko Matsumura (Planner), and Mr. Maroo Wada (Publicity).

GR: How many people were working on Evolution?

TE: At the start of the project there were just two planners, two programmers and two people working on the graphics. They began the research and development of the project. During the development this increased, until at the end, there were around 40 to 45 people.

GR: What is Sting's relationship with ESP and did it have any influence on Evolution?

A. In the ESP group there are a number of companies who, in different ways, are helping each other. For small companies who can't do it themselves, ESP will handle the management and marketing of their games. Also, if there are insufficient staff members at one company to complete a project, then they can borrow staff from other companies in the ESP group to help out. With *Evolution* we borrowed some staff from other ESP companies to help us out.

GR: Before the project started, were you able to research the Dreamcast hardware?

A. In the beginning, we were using a Power VR video card and running under the Windows environment with an Intel processor, then little by little the hardware came together. The libraries that came from Sega were quite late, so as soon as we got something new, we started using it straight away. We didn't really get to do any research first. We developed *Evolution* at the same pace as the hardware progressed.

GR: How did you decide on the game's late-1930s period setting?

A. I'm sure you know the famous movie series starring Indiana Jones. We wanted to set the game in that general time because to anyone who knows it, it's an easily understood period. Nobuhiko Matsumura likes military things, so he's very interested in this period, because it conveniently has all the military vehicles he likes, such as tanks and planes, etc. In Japan, there are a lot of fantasy RPGs, but we were a little bored with this, so we wanted to make a slightly more contemporary RPG with these kinds of mechanical creations.

GR: What kind of player did you create Evolution for?

A. Well, naturally we aimed it for people who, like us, are a little tired of the same old fantasy RPG. But we thought it might also appeal to those players who have an interest in tanks, etc. *Baroque's* game image appealed to a very limited range of users and although this was produced on a different line with a different director, Yoshihisa Tomita realized this and decided to go for a different approach. Instead of showing realism he wanted a cute and comical image which anyone could get into.

GR: Were there any specific difficulties in trying to create these anime-like characters?

A. These kind of anime characters in *Evolution* are all round, aren't they? Round 3D models need a lot more polygons and so they're harder to produce than realistic characters. In addition, the characters' motion was hard work as well. Normal people are thin and easy to move. They can wrap their arms around things with little difficulty; however, with our rounded characters with big heads, we soon found that if we tried to do exactly the same motion, then the character model's parts

would start to cut into each other and overlap. In order to overcome this, the designers had to redo all the motion to ensure that this didn't occur.

GR: How long did it take you to complete the game's design?

A. We designed the main characters fairly early on in development. We also decided on the design for the town and dungeon early on as well, but when we were in the modeling phase, there were many occasions when we compared the designers' pictures to the final CG models and there was something that wasn't quite right, so we needed to redesign it. Because of this, we were really designing all the way through development, right up to the very end.

GR: Were you confident at the start of development that you would be able to complete such an ambitious project as Evolution?

A. Not really [laugh]. Because we didn't have enough time, we had to cut out a lot of things out, so this time *Evolution* isn't exactly 100 percent of what we wanted it to be. It's more like 30 percent. In the beginning, we planned to do it all, but as development progressed, we kept finding things that we would be unable to do in time, so we cut them out. Those things which we couldn't do this time might become a sequel in the future.

GR: Was there anything in particular you wanted to do but had to leave out in the end?

A. In the fight scenes, we wanted a special attack where two players could merge together, but it was far too difficult to do. In order to do this technique, we would have had to move each character together, but to get the motion just right would have been very difficult and taken far too long to have developed.

GR: Where did you get your ideas for all the wonderful characters?

A. We didn't particularly choose characters with just a 1930s image; we had lots of different ideas for them. First of all, we wanted a bright and lively hero. Then to compensate for him being a bit boisterous, we had him accompanied by a quiet and modest girl. Then we thought that one more cute but slightly irritating girl would be good as well. We wanted characters that would fit into the story and that would be liked by the players. This time in particular, we spent a lot of time on designing the characters to be unique so that they wouldn't seem to double up on personalities and would appeal to everyone.

GR: Was there any special character that you really wanted to put in?

A. Gre Nade is a very exceptional character, and if there was time, we really wanted to put him in. Gre's image comes from the character Alfred from *Batman*. We based Gre on a kind of anime version of him. I thought it would be nice to have a gentleman butler attending to the whims of his rich young master. In Japan, he's now a very popular character, much more than we thought he might become.

GR: Are you incorporating any of the menu systems from past Sting games, or is Evolution using an all-new system?

A. It was created by the same person who created the previous menu systems for other games, so it's probably not that much different. We weren't particularly aiming to have an original menu system for *Evolution*, just an orthodox one. While it may not be the perfect menu system, it's probably as good as a menu system needs to be. If we changed it, then there's a danger that it might become more complex and less friendly for players to use. In that case, it would be better not to have changed it in the first place.

GR: Who first conceptualized Mag's unique robotic arm attachment and why did you decide to implement it?



A. It was Nobuhiko Matsumura who had the idea. You know about the swiss army penknife, don't you? Inside it there are lots of different kinds of devices and tools and we had that kind of image in mind for the Psyflame. Right from the very beginning we thought that it would be an interesting feature to have, not necessarily because it's cool, but because it's very comical.

GR: When designing Evolution's enemies, did you ever consider using intelligent humanoid enemies, or had you always planned to use insects and animals?

A. There are some human enemies, but only a few. Most are insects or animals. If we had you fighting a lot of humans, then there would have been a moral conflict of ethics. That's why in Japanese RPGs you don't often see human enemies. In relation to just *Evolution*, the places that your characters go to aren't places that most normal people would enter anyway.

GR: Why did you decide to design the battles using a low, dramatic camera?

A. In order to make the characters look as cool as possible, we wanted the camera to be close up to them to show off their motion. One of the advantages of the Dreamcast is that even if you zoom up in to the characters, they still look beautiful.

GR: Did you have any problems implementing this kind of camera work?

A. On the map, there are various objects like pillars that occasionally obstruct the camera's viewpoint, but we couldn't do anything about this, so that's the way it is. The reason for this is that during the various scenes the camera will move in order to follow the characters or view the magic. In addition, the places you fight are also different. On one map, there are no objects, so you can see everything, but on another map there might be a boulder that blocks the view from a certain angle. Calculating the camera's angle so that we can view everything by moving the camera from behind objects for every different kind of map was impossible. We did arrange the camera work so as to avoid this situation as much as possible; however, there are still a few cases when objects get in the way.

GR: How many different "conditions" are there in battle, and could you tell us about the worst one?

A. There are around seven conditions, such as Confusion and Sleep, but the worst one is Brain-Washing, where you actually begin to like the enemy and fight your fellow characters instead. You can take a fair amount of damage from this, so if anyone in your team is affected by this condition, then you're in big trouble. You'd better heal them as soon as possible. In other games with this feature, it isn't so bad, but in *Evolution* it's a pretty severe case [laughs]!

GR: The three square movement system used in combat adds a touch of strategy to battles. Would you like to take this further in your next RPG, perhaps in a strategy RPG?

A. We chose this system because we wanted to add a little bit of strategy to the combat, but at the same time keep the rules simple. We haven't had time to check the players' reactions to this yet, so we can't say whether we'll keep this as it is or whether we'll modify it.

GR: Did you use the same random dungeon system as Baroque?

A. We couldn't just take the random dungeon system from *Baroque* and use it exactly as it was in *Evolution*. There are subtle differences in the two games, so although we used the techniques we developed for the *Baroque* system as the base, we did, in fact, create a new system for *Evolution*. The biggest difference is only that there are no dead ends in *Baroque*, but there are in *Evolution*. We thought that this was more natural and a lot more interesting for the players.

GR: The sound in Evolution is very good. We especially enjoy the ambient, atmospheric music of the dungeons. What image did you have for the game's music?

A. There are various types of dungeons, such as lava or ice. We asked the sound team to create the music to match these environments, so, for example, the music for the ice dungeons has a very cold, dry feeling to it.

GR: Is it much easier to use the CRI ADX compression tools with Dreamcast, due to its fairly large sound RAM?

A. It's practically identical to the Saturn version, and we've already used it before for *Baroque*. The CPU has plenty of power, so we can use lots of sound and music at the same time. We're even using the ADX for the player's voices as well. All we have to do is make a request and it'll read it straight from the CD-ROM and play it. There are eight sound channels and we're using them all for the BGM, voices and sound effects.

GR: Evolution's characters (especially Mag Launcher) are very likable. Will we ever see them in another RPG?

A. If the characters become very popular, then we might put them into another game as a special extra feature.

GR: Is it possible that the characters could be turned into an anime series?

A. At the moment there's a plan for them to appear in a novel. If things go well, then from there they might be turned into an anime series. We've heard from a person who works at an anime company that the *Evolution* characters are really good and that people are paying attention to them.

GR: Tell us a little about the Army. Where do they come from?

A. They are an army from another continent and they are searching for items from a previous civilization that fell a long time ago. They heard that the items they are searching for are in the same place that the characters are in. At times they obstruct your progress.

GR: Were you ever going to record voices for the exchanges between characters, or did you specifically want to keep it text-based?

A. We did want to have complete voices for all the characters, but we were working on the scenario right up to the very end. At that point, recording the voices in such a short time would have been impossible.

GR: Are there any plans to bring Evolution to America and Europe as a launch title? Have you been speaking with any interested parties thus far, or will Sega release it?

A. We will most probably release it abroad under the Sega label.

GR: Did you always plan to have a single, main town in the game?

A. This time, *Evolution* isn't the kind of game where you need to go from town to town to reach your goal. The hero's house is in this town, so when he returns from the dungeons he's always going to come back to the same town.

GR: Why are all the characters' names based on weapons?

A. It's because of Nobuhiko Matsumura's hobby. He likes military weapons and wanted to have all the characters' names uniformly based on weapons. Although most of them are commonly used in anime and manga, a few of them won't be known by most people. For example, Pepper Box is actually the name of a round revolver shaped like a real pepper shaker that was used in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. For those who have an interest in such things, it's a little bit of fun for them to research the names and discover their true meanings. They can then discuss what they've found on our home page. However, even if you don't know any of the meanings, it won't affect your enjoyment of the game, because in the end they are only the character's names. As much as possible, we would like to use the same names for the English version as well.

GR: Now that the game is finally finished, what are your feelings?

A. Because this was our first Dreamcast game, the development of *Evolution* was really hard for us and we left a lot out. However, it doesn't end here. All the things we couldn't do this time we'll put into the sequel or into a new project. We don't often do sequels, but if the user reaction is strong enough, then we'll consider it. We learned a lot from this project and from working with people from other companies, and we'll use this knowledge to make an even better Dreamcast game next time. Different to our previous game, *Baroque*, *Evolution* has cute and comical characters. Sting is capable of producing many different types of games, from the dark and moody *Baroque* to the bright and humorous *Evolution*. I think that you can definitely look forward to the next title from us.

We'd like to thank Team Evolution for their time, and wish everyone at Sting continued success in 1999!

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Where it all happens: the Sting offices!

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sega rally 2



Despite the doubts and delays, Sega Rally 2 delivers the goods

SEGA RALLY 2
CHAMPIONSHIP

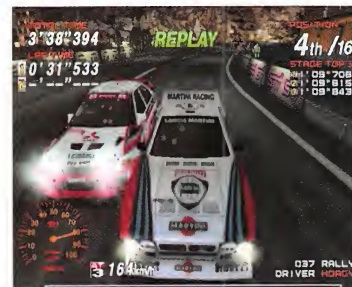
(A) The Corolla WRC slides its way through a turn on the wet tarmac. (B) Neck and neck nearing a jump, look at the quality of shading on the car models. (C) Though less populated than the arcade version, the trackside attendance is nonetheless appreciated. (D) Notice the far draw distance in this long stretch of bridge. (E) A CPU Celica attempts to thwart the red Lancia Delta in the rain. (F) In this replay shot, the effect of the headlights can clearly be seen illuminating the nearby environment. Dreamcast power!

Game Over, Yeeaaahh!" From our perusals of earlier incarnations and some rather negative press, we were edging towards this negative conclusion regarding this highly anticipated Dreamcast arcade-with-extra-bells-and-whistles racing title. The reason? Mere months before the game's initial release, no playable game was shown at the Japanese trade shows, and the video footage was looking decidedly like a PC game. Then came the inevitable delays as Sega's external workhorse, Genki (not the original programmers of the arcade game), toiled in two 12-hour shifts

night and day to save the title from a fate too terrible to contemplate: a less-than-impressive port of a Step 2 Arcade masterpiece.

Fortunately, the overworked Genki have succeeded in creating a wonderfully playable and stunningly attractive rally title, with an overwhelming array of recommendations and a couple of shortfalls, as expected. Those anticipating an arcade-perfect conversion are in for a treat, as the play mechanics, textures and general control perfect the arcade in every way. In fact, only the most meticulous and anorak-wearing gaming freak would be able to tell any subtle differences. Fortunately, I am that freak, and can tell you that the arcade runs at a higher resolution, the animations on the spectators that rush in from the track to the barriers are less impressive (you can almost run over the scampering folk in the arcade, while the more timid Dreamcast onlookers dart back far before you reach them), the draw-in rates are a little more noticeable on the Dreamcast, and the various spray effects from the tires are less convincing. Other than these minor discrepancies, the games are identical. Oh, apart from the slowdown, of course.

Slowdown?! Yes, much as it pains me to report, the frame rate of *Sega Rally 2* suffers a little chug-a-lug, as the more complicated corners (such as u-bends, where a large amount of scenery needs to be drawn in) cause the game to stutter, and the previous 50-60 frames per second wobbles down to a precarious 30 fps before galloping back up again. Initially, this caused extreme consternation (indeed, the powersliding is actually affected by the slowdown, sometimes causing overshooting of the racing line), until we realized that the visual display, lack of polygonal glitching and wondrous beauty of the graphics more than made up for the stuttering. In fact, aside from the distant course "pinging" into view (either mountains organically appearing in a smooth manner like N64 pop-up, or palm trees simply appearing out of the ether like the PlayStation) and the rather limp crowd (attendance for this championship was obviously so low that the organizers built two-dimensional cardboard folk to populate the race), this is by far the most impressive racer on any system. Except for the rain effects — they suck. The reasons for the slowdown must be due to the Microsoft-developed operating system and programmers getting to grips with the new hardware.



The single player game has plenty of pulse-pounding fender-to-fender racing action! Even the replays are guaranteed to raise your heart rate!





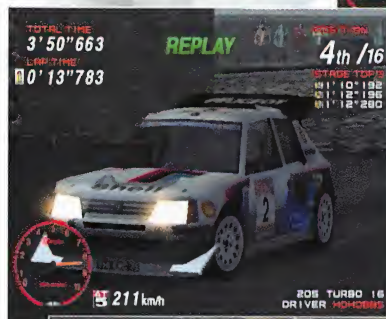
The Dreamcast gets worked overtime in the two-player split-screen mode, but is ultimately able to deliver a playable experience. Just ignore the draw-in!

Before you settle into your two full days of racing (all you need to complete the 10 Year Championship described below), check the numerous options, including full car tweaking, profiles of the cars, and the usual array of options. Aside from Arcade and the 10 Year epic series of races, Time Attack mode allows you to zip around a spectatorless (and thus, mostly slowdown-free) track of your choosing, with only your "ghost car" to beat. Any combination of car and track time can be recorded, leading to 340 separate course records to claim! In fact, the only real detractor of the Time Attack (aside from the lack of adrenaline a real Arcade mode race provides) is that the ghost car is very much solid, and blocks your vision completely when you try to pass it. Finally, an untried Network Play and a commendable two-player mode (watch that draw-in though – ouch!) enhances an already exceptional package.

Gameplay is the single most important feature, and *Sega Rally 2* fails to disappoint even the most zealous racing fiend. Take one of twenty cars (from an initial selection of eight) around one of 17 massively wide and hugely undulating courses in either arcade mode, or the more intensive 10 Year Championship. One starts at position 16 and weaves past three or four competitors on each one-lap course before clocking in and repeating the process, while a co-pilot barks sometimes indistinguishable comments about the approaching topography. Obviously, this means that a first place can only be achieved on the fourth track, and you'll spend most of your time locating racing lines, powersliding to avoid hitting fences, mud banks and other objects, and looking for your next opponent to pass. Not quite the mass of cars that *Daytona 2* offers, but that's not the point.

The point is that the courses (either the stand-alone areas of Desert or the three-tracks-in-one Muddy Jungle trail) are fabulous in their construction: the placement of opponents allows only the finest racers to complete

the 10 Year Championship, and the secret course is an added bonus to behold (created as two separate courses for you and one other opponent!). Subtract any polygonal seams, z-buffering break-up and a distinct lack of superb car reflections, exceptional detail (headlights piercing the snow, and perfect physics for every officially licensed car) plus other effects (tire skidding marks, water splashes and drifting snow) and you're onto the definition of what racing games are all about. With a rock-solid Internet link-up scheduled for the U.S., this alone is worth the price of admission, assuming the slowdown blemish is scrubbed away for the official launch. ☹



While these shots can't convey the sense of motion and realism that the actual game exhibits...well, they're close!

World Republic says "The power of the Dreamcast (and means all-night coding) have produced an eminently playable and gorgeous conversion. A bit of chug? I'll live." A-



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World Republic Review • developer Eighting/Raizing publisher Hudson • available in Japan now

bloody roar 2



Hudson deliver a satisfying update of their beastly fighter!

The dueling beasts are back in Hudson's *Bloody Roar 2*, a fine sequel with five new characters and the expected enhanced graphics and gameplay. For the *BR* virgins out there, this series revolves around beastly transformations. Each character, called a zoanthrope, begins in human form, but with a quick button press, will metamorphose into an animal incarnation. You can transform right at the start of a match if you wish, but it's best to build up your beast meter a bit, for

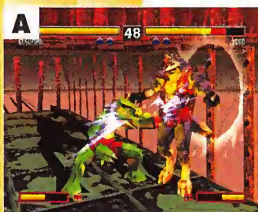
as you take damage in beast form, your ability to hold your shape fades and you revert to human status. As a beast you have more power and more moves, and in *Bloody Roar 2*, the ability to unleash a devastating Beast Drive. Here, the background transforms into a multi-colored grid and a mad flurry of attacks pummels your opponent.

New characters include Jenny, Busuzima, Stun, Marvel, and Uriko. Jenny, in her bat-like animal form, features the requisite full bosom

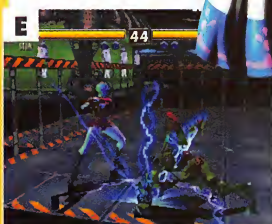
and general lack of attire. Busuzima is a spindly fellow who transforms into a lethal chameleon, and Stun takes the form of a giant insect. Marvel assumes Leopard form, and Uriko becomes a cat-like half beast. From the first game, Alice, Bakuryu, Yugo, and Shen Long return, and Gado enters the scene as a boss here.

With its caged arenas, which can be dramatically smashed through, and its quick, in-air recoveries, there's a bit of *Fighting Vipers* in the gameplay. Certainly not a bad thing at all, and as with most new fighters, nearly everything in it can be linked to another game. It's the implementation that counts in the end, and *Bloody Roar 2* does well in this regard. It's once again an easy game to pick up and play, with fairly effortless combos and a lot of flash to keep those of short attention spans interested. Satisfying and painful-looking throws are in abundance and more advanced features such as guard attacking and breaking are easy to use.

A good evolution of the first game, *Bloody Roar 2* amps itself up enough to justify its existence. As implied though, it's not revolutionary in any way, and that's okay. It's a solid and fast 60 frames fighter with a still entertaining gimmick. >#<



(A) Busuzima in chameleon form shows Yugo what for with this attack. (B) Half Beast Uriko gives Long a bit of the old cat scratch fever. (C) Marvel gives Jenny something to marvel at just before smashing her face in.



(D) Marvel the leopard learns Stun a thing or two with his devastating Beast Drive attack. (E) Stun pounds the ground with an electric charge. Good thing Jenny's got boots on.



World Republic says "Bloody Roar 2 is a well-bred sequel with enough new characters and enhancements to easily please fans of the first." **B+**

Bloody Roar 2 © Hudson 1999.



World Republic Review • developer/publisher YUKES • available in japan now

eretzvaju



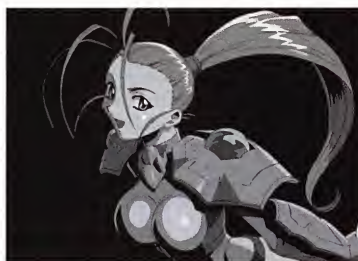
Yukes delves into the 3D fighting genre and comes out a winner!

If I had it my way, Yukes would be working on *Hermie the Hopperhead 3* by now, but I'll take their uncommon new fighter *Eretzvaju* just the same. In the wake of the ambitious but critically discredited *Soukaigi* for Square (see GR Issue 3), it's great to see them bounce back with such a strong entry in the hit-and-miss fighting category.

The most unique aspect of this beautiful looking game is in the simplicity of the control and how it pertains to your enemy's proximity. All the moves are performed via the triangle button, and a corresponding direction on the D-pad. Depending on how far you are from your opponent, different moves will result.

The ability to trap a stunned or surprised enemy in a halo of light launches one of each character's multiple special attacks, which are displayed in inspired real-time glory. Ariel Prose (the well-endowed female of the bunch), for instance, glides in swiftly and straddles her prey, pinning him or her to the ground before stabbing downward with a beam of brilliant light that she draws from the sky. Each strand of her hair is a separate polygon, as are her other assets. There are some truly spectacular moments to be had in *Eretzvaju*, and

while they may be more show than go, as Yukes have opted for simplicity over complexity, they are still masterfully executed. Of course, there's also a block button, a 3D button and, along with the ability to run, the arenas are quite large. The character design, too, is excellent (although I must concede that this month's other import 3D offering, the exceptional *Bloody Roar 2*, has even better battles), as is the soundtrack. February has been a great month for quality 3D fighters on the PlayStation, but next month Capcom will raise the bar yet again... ⚡



(A) He'll most likely never get a woody again. (B-E) Yukes have packed *Eretzvaju* with spectacular lighting effects, and some truly inspired cinematic takedowns. Note the hair (C & D) – the detail in this game is just amazing.



World Republic says "If you're looking for your next fighting game it's a hard choice between this and *Bloody Roar 2*. Buy 'em both and go home happy!" B+

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Playstation Preview

snowbo kids plus

GAME BY ATLUS

Here's a switch. For once a Nintendo 64 game has been ported for play on the PlayStation, and while I don't mean to disrespect Atlus, man, what a mistake! You just cannot compare the two. While the PS game is still good fun and it does feature some exclusive new characters, the z-buffering woes, clipping, and pop-up, none of which are evident on the 64, pretty much poo on this cool big-nosed affair. If you could just port the tunes from the PS game onto the 64, hey, we'd have the perfect version. ⚡ C

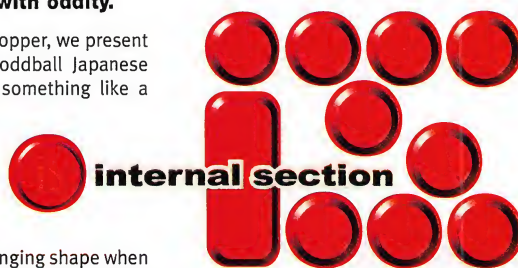




Square's freaky new shooter pulses with oddity.

For the curious and adventuresome import shopper, we present for your consideration *Internal Section*. This oddball Japanese shooter from Positron and Square resembles something like a graphic designer's revisionist take on *Tempest* and *NzO*. It's a really unique looking game, and I fear that my words and these shots cannot satisfactorily convey the more particular elements of its aesthetic.

You travel down a straight, web-like tunnel, your ship represented as a morphing crystal, changing shape when you change weapons (which are based on the animals of the Chinese Zodiac). Beyond the tube, broad swaths of intricate rotating patterns and bizarre flat shaded objects and structures swirl around and fly past you. Dolphins, crystals, fan-like sheets, and in one motif, line representations of phalluses, sperm, and ovum populate the periphery. You won't find lens flares or any of that sort of nonsense, just a clean, 60 frames dose of millennial psychedelia.



(A) *Internal Section's* bosses are nothing if not bizarre. Check out this letter spewing newspaper. (B) A place not only of sight and sound, but of shooting. (C) This level one boss is feeling the pinch of the all powerful Eraser mega-bomb.



Targets within the tube are as strange as the backdrops. Mostly, you're firing at little multi-colored crystalline objects, but shifting number puzzles, Rubik's Cubes, and streams of rotating mini-monoliths will litter your path.

Each of the eight four phase levels holds a boss at its conclusion. Here you switch from the tube to an open arena where you orbit your foe, moving left and right to attack and dodge. Again, strangeness abounds as a letter spewing newspaper, teddy bear controlled spacecraft, giant mercury blob, and a mass of ordered cubes present themselves for your destruction.

Internal Section is notable too in that peaks in the music affect the backgrounds. Ribbons along the tube shift color in time with the music, a great electronic soundtrack by Avex Trax (*Bust a Groove*). And any level you've completed can be played one at a time, sans the boss, with your own music CD in the drive, changing the background accordingly. In one of the later stages, targets even pulse along with the bass like the cubes of the Saturn CD player.

IS is a very simple game. There are no power-ups, and unlimited continues sap any real challenge from it, but that's not really the point. You're just supposed to trip out on it for half an hour or so, enjoying shooting and dodging and letting your eyes wander around in the backdrops. ㄖㄥ



(A) More strangeness in *Internal Section* as you must shoot the tiles to solve this simple number puzzle. (B) This reflective mercury blob boss is just cool to look at.



World Republic says "This experimental shooter from Square and Positron is one of the most unique looking games on PlayStation. It's basic, sure, but always transfixing." B+



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher NEC • available in japan now

sengoku turb



They just don't get any more busted than this... Beware the Turb...



World Republic says "Sengoku Turb is just too weird in every way. Under the silly exterior there's not much in the way of depth or enjoyment" **C-**

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Playstation Preview

brave saga

GAME BY TAKARA

Takara's new SD Robot strategy/rpg puts you in the middle of the final conflict between good and evil in the 21st century. While the gameplay in effect is similar to that of *Shining Force*, what sets Takara's new entry apart is its mixture of styles. Blending ingredients from the last decade of game development, *Brave Saga* contains detailed traditional sprite-based characters, pre-rendered backgrounds, and polygonal battlefields. Although non-Japanese gamers will have nary a clue of what's going on (other than you're basically strategically positioning yourself to kill bad guys), the interface is pretty user friendly, and the game moves along at a good pace. Strategy/rpg fans fond of Bandai's similar fare will likely find this one irresistible. ⚡



Presenting the **Ultimate** and only **Official** Guide to the video gaming event of the year! Beware of incomplete imitations!

"About ten Metal Gear Solid-related books (guidebooks and more) have been published and sold in Japan. However, there is not a single one that matches the excellence of the guidebook by Millenium. Namely, the taste (artistic sense) oozing from all pages is superb. This is the kind of book we have been waiting for!"

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"Above all things, I am extremely touched that this "game" called Metal Gear Solid, created by a group of Japanese people, is very sincerely dealt with as a piece of art.

"I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the staff who have put together this wonderful guidebook.

"Thank you very much."

Hideo Kojima
Creator and Director of Metal Gear Solid

"[a] terrific... and rather thorough Metal Gear Solid strategy guide [with] clever reading and helpful data. This book has it all."

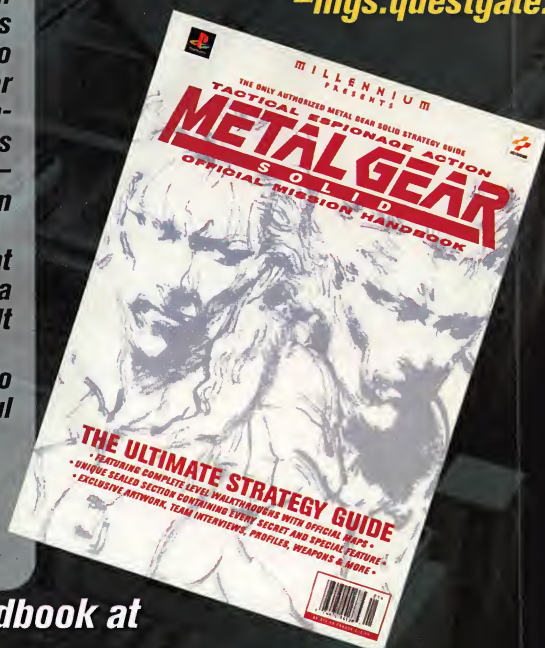
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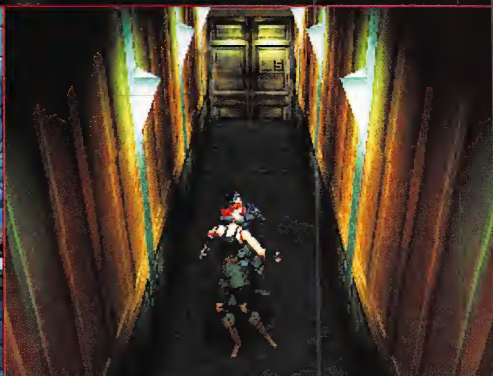
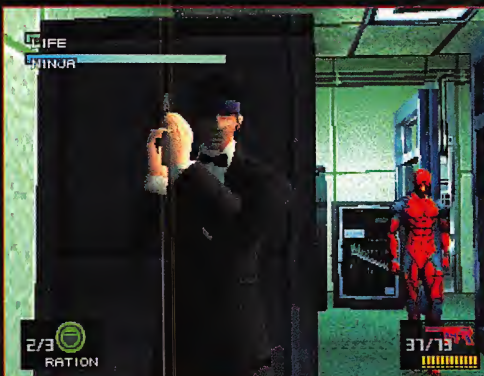
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KOTETSU

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1995 MEE (JP)

60 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★★1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY

Story: This remarkable new series revolves around the escapades of Linn Suzuki, a sort of Lina Inverse character with a katana rather than magical accompaniment. Banished as a child to a region with no amenities, and raised by a 100-year-old monstrous hag, she has survived to this point as a slave made to do all manner of manual labor. Somehow, though, she has managed to retain her annoying English demeanor and become one mean little minx...in a cute way. She arrives in Tokyo only to be thrust into the middle of a vicious triangle between a bent corporation, sexy detective Miho Kuan, and a peculiar magician who runs a powerful underground guild. When magic boy sends a spell puppet (the exact replica of detective Miho) into the tub with Linn for a little scrub-a-dub-dub, all hell breaks loose and the story begins to gel, as do other certain bodily items... This one's definitely not for the kids. Next comes the corporation's hired assassin (hey, if you can't beat 'em, kill 'em!), Kagari. Bursting from her tight leather-clad apparel, this hotty, who is, shall we say, at one with nature, takes a brutal slice to the belly only to return in episode two bent on bloody revenge. Welcome to the hot springs from hell!

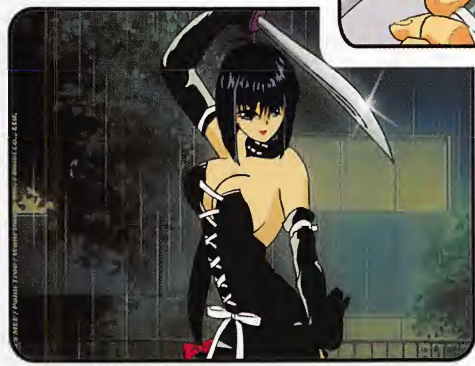
Animation: Very good quality throughout. I really hope we see more of this series in the future.

Character Design: Excellent. The female contingent is to die for, as are the exaggerated moments. I especially like the way the sight of bare breasts causes spouting nose bleeds. This is great stuff.

Soundtrack: It's totally original for one thing. Traditional Japanese flutes and drums with a whimsical feel. Magnificent.

Fight Scenes: Spectacular. Breasts, blood, demon mutations, great animation, and sword play! It doesn't get much better!

Final Analysis: ADV have an eye for these hot numbers. A perfect blend of action, comedy, sex, and mysticism. *Adventures of Kotetsu* is a must-buy for action and adventure fans (over the age of 16 of course) everywhere!



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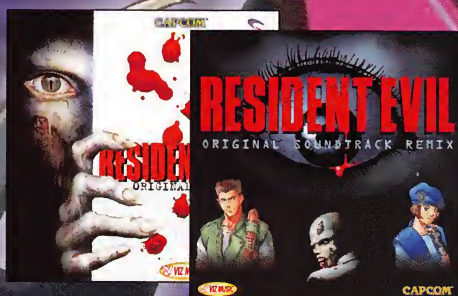
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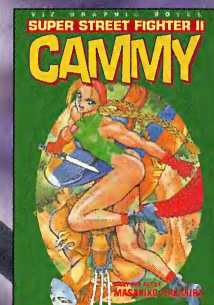
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BATTLE ATHLETES: VICTORY

• 1998 PIONEER (USA)

85 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆1/2 ACTION/COMEDY/ADVENTURE

Story: The war of 2015 between two Earth superpowers was close to bringing about the end of all mankind, when suddenly a massive shift in the Earth's rotation caused a disaster of global proportions. This disaster united the survivors, and a new united mankind was born. In the year 3045, after a full recovery, and having reached the outer frontiers of space, it seemed that history would repeat itself as humankind waged war again, this time against the alien race. Realizing that the advanced weapons technology on both sides meant there could never be a true winner, it was agreed that wars would be decided by athletic competition. When a single human man emerged victorious against the physically superior aliens, it gave rise to a movement that swept the Earth. In 2036, every world gathered together to form a colossal space station where the pinnacle of female athletes would annually train for the coveted Cosmic Beauty Crown. But our heroine, Akari, has got to get there first. From the numerous training schools, only three girls will advance from each to compete on this level, and the competition is beyond fierce. This is the

story of one girl's struggle to overcome the odds (like, she's got really bad luck), attempt to live up to the legacy of her mother (a former Cosmic Beauty!) and become just that.

Animation: "Victory" has the highest quality animation I've seen from this series yet.

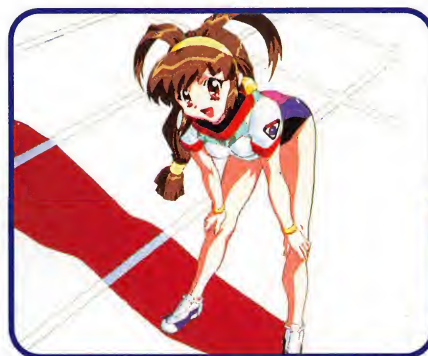
Dubbing: Pioneer dubs are so good that you can't tell they were dubbed.

Character Design: The conceptual designers have done a bang-up job portraying the year 4998, and melding it with hard-core manga style.

Soundtrack: The arrangements all match the action onscreen perfectly.

Fight Scenes: Chick fights are brutal! And these are filled with comedy, too!

Final Analysis: Of all the *Battle Athletes* episodes, I like "Victory" the most. Wacky hijinx make it an entertaining 85 minutes. It's a little girly for my taste but it's a quality series through and through.



SUPER-HYPER ACTION



REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA

• 1998 SOFTWARE SCULPTORS (USA)

75 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆☆ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: As usual, Utena is as enigmatic as ever. Fasten your head restraints and get ready for three supremely weird episodes beginning with...exploding curry! Nanami's secret sauce causes quite a stir when Utena becomes Anthy and Anthy becomes Utena! Oops. Guess who's got her hands full with Saionji...you guessed it. And she's actually feeling a little pity! When Saionji decides to make another bid for his Rose Bride, things really get out of hand. And wait till you get a load of Nanami's dark side! It's a tangled web up the spiral staircase this time around, as *Revolutionary Girl Utena* continues to deliver delightful oddities.

Animation: The series continues to deliver quality TV-level animation.

Dubbing: As usual, it's about as perfect as it gets.

Character Design: Unique and exquisite with its own distinct style.

Soundtrack: As with the previous episodes, the first-rate classical

ensemble and gothic overtures deliver.

Fight Scenes: These three episodes are light on the battle front. The duel for the Rose Bride, however, is always cool.

Highlight: Nanami's trip to India.

Final Analysis: If you're already into *Utena*, I must sound like a broken record by now. We'll probably enjoy the rest of the series here at AR and then do a series overview. The series is obviously going to deliver until the very end – which should be very interesting. More Chu-Chu!



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023

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SAKURA WARS

AR



SAKURA WARS

• 1999 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1997 Sega/Bandai/RED (JP)

60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★★1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: *Sakura Wars* is based on one of the greatest Saturn games never to arrive Stateside. Set in the year 1919, the story follows the building of a defense force using newly developed steam-powered weapons technology to defend the Earth against Demon Forces. These suits, called Oobus, are steam-driven robots that can only be moved (they must weigh a ton) by those who harness strong psychic skills. Lucky for us that happens to be a team of beautiful young women from around the world! The first pilot is Kanzaki Sumire, the granddaughter of the president of the company that created the technology, Kanzaki Heavy Industries. The first two episodes set the stage for what promises to be one of the year's greatest anime series as we get to know Kanzaki and the rest of the team – and some Demons too!

Animation: Very good quality throughout, with extra attention given to the inspired demon attack sequences, where-in Giger-inspired monstrosities (ok, they look exactly like ALIENS) are sliced, diced

and blown to bits by a diverse team of pugnacious females!

Dubbing: Spared no expense. ADV treat their A titles especially well, and this is definitely one of 'em.

Character Design: The mecha/1920s motif is portrayed superlatively, and the character design is gorgeous. Most incredible of all, however, are the brilliantly designed Ooba suits and circa 1920s weaponry.

Soundtrack: Great period music from the '20s mixed with classic anime event tunes.

Fight Scenes: Memorable to say the least. Beautifully choreographed and animated, great explosions, and lots of cool lighting effects.

Highlight: The first battle against aliens is amazing. It spans a couple of minutes and features one of the biggest guns I have ever seen!

Final Analysis: In the tradition of the finest character-driven action dramas, *Sakura Wars* is an inspired series with a diverse cast of characters that will have you glued to the screen.



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02>
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BASTARD!! Exodus

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1992 KAZUSHI / SHUEISHA
60 MINUTES • ENGLISH DUBBED / SUB-TITLED



ACTION ADVENTURE

Story: The God of Destruction is incredibly close to being released, but Dark Shneider just happens to be in town.

Character Design: The Thunder Empress, Arshes Nei. Shneider is typically arrogant and likeable.

Animation: The apocalyptic forces on display in battle are very well animated, while expressions are given choice treatment. The style is just slightly dated, but it's compensated for by the manic pace of action.

Dubbing: Like most Pioneer dubs, *BE* is very solid. At least the expression sounds like the voice actors have read and rehearsed their roles. As a result, getting the Sub or Dub is strictly a matter of preference.

Soundtrack: All the *Bastard* episodes have excellent orchestrated music. Definitely worth tracking down the soundtrack.

Fight Scenes: Arshes Nei vs. Dark Shneider, round 1, fight! Dark Shneider vs. Ansla-Sax Cyclops, round 2, fight! Massive battles!

Highlight: The final battle has enough magic to destroy the world.

Final Analysis: Why do I enjoy *Bastard!!* so much? Well, among all the bizarre candy-coated animes that I see every month, *Bastard!!* supplies drama, gore, fantasy, and huge explosions. That's all I need.



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life.

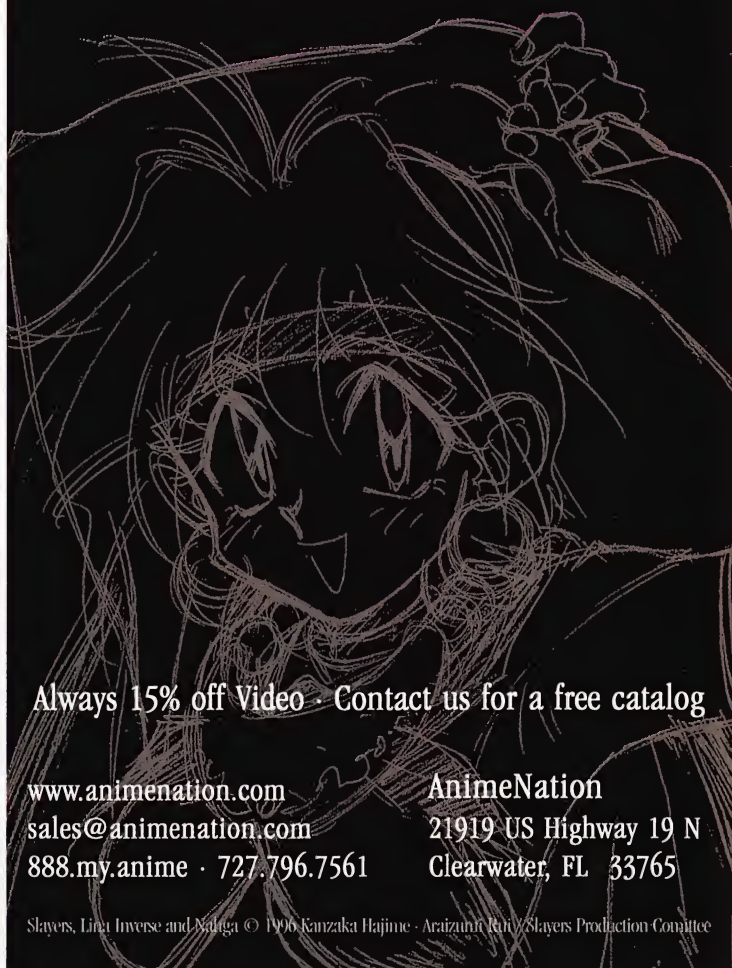
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SORCERER HUNTERS VOL. 2

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



ACTION/COMEDY/ADVENTURE



Story: Episode 4: Just when it looks like Carrot might finally score when he lands a hot date with a chick named Bomber, things once again don't go his way. After thwarting multiple traps by Tira and Chocolate to keep him out of Bomber's loving arms, his plans get quite literally blown sky high. Episode 5: She's a girl named Lake. No, she's a lake that looks like a girl? In this touching little fable, Carrot falls for a lake which comes alive once every 100 years (by spawning a little honey that only lives for that day) to judge mankind. It's a sweet little story. Episode 6: Big Momma sends the Hunters after a magic user who's turning people into popsicles. Turns out it's just a guy whose powers get out of hand as he tries to protect his little sister. The Sorcerer Hunters chill him out and everyone goes home happy.

Animation: Good overall. Crowd scenes don't move, but there aren't that many. Has its moments.

Dubbing: On par with the Volume 1. Very Good.

Character Design: Very good overall, although these three episodes aren't as rich in demons as the last. They sex it up good, though.

Soundtrack: Playful melodies carry over episode to episode.

Fight Scenes: Not much to speak of in this edition, I'm afraid.

Final Analysis: While all three episodes establish once and for all that Carrot's a horn dog, the first two are sweet little stories straying somewhat from the tone set by the first three episodes. Things revert back to whimsical mysticism in episode three somewhat, and I hope that's where the rest of the series leads.



GALAXY FRAULEIN YUNA

• 1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1995 RED (JP)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH



1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: Well, things start out sunny side up... Literally! Picture a massive mech, enormous fry pan in hand (or claw, or whatever) racing through the blistering heat of re-entry...cooking an egg! Er, yah, ok. Hey, it beat Iron Girl's Maple Sushi Pancakes! Ever seen steel blush? It would if it could right now, baby. Yes, *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna* is one of those "out-there" types of anime (like all anime's not out there... let's just say this one is *really* out there). Anyway, I'm pretty sure she's trying to save the universe...

Animation: By '95 standards, real good. By '99 standards...well, thankfully, things haven't changed all that much; it's still really good!

Dubbing: It's a good one. I wonder how ADV got so many squeaky girls into the studio at once? That must have been some recording session!

Character Design: Oh, it is cute. Yuna's cute, her friends are cute...there's even a

puppy. Thank God for the evil wench, Mistress Fraulein D! The mech designs are hot, too.

Soundtrack: A good overall sci-fi score.

Fight Scenes: A diverse mix from girly scraps to full scale mech battles...cool!

Highlight: The brief battle between Saline and the fake Yuna Unit was cool, but Yuna's near execution, subsequent rescue and the battle that followed is clearly the money shot.

Final Analysis: Yuna's a really cool old-school anime. It's really cute, but not so fruity as you might imagine. If you missed the subbed version or just found it, it's definitely a must see if you like fun, hyper-kinetic exaggerated anime.



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2. Escaflowne animevillage.com
3. Gundam 0083 av.com
4. Saber Marionette J av.com
5. Slayers: Explosion Array ADV

B. Williams

1. Ninja Resurrection ADV
2. Cutey Honey Vol. 3 ADV
3. Ninja Scroll Manga
4. Daimajin ADV
5. Plastic Little ADV

M. Griffin

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2. Ninja Resurrection ADV
3. Cutey Honey Vol. 3 ADV
4. Ninja Scroll Manga
5. Darkside Blues CPM



Gamers' Republic anime top 5

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READERS' TOP 5

1. Evangelion ADV
2. Poltergeist Report U.S. Manga
3. Darkstalkers VIZ
4. Macross Plus Manga Video
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To enter the ADV/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 218, Westlake Village, CA 91361. First prize will receive: A Sony PlayStation & Tekken 3, A Tekken Action Figure, The Tekken Movie From ADV, and a 1-YEAR Subscription to Gamers Republic. Second place will receive The Tekken movie, a Tekken action figure, and a 1-year subscription to GR, and third place will receive the Tekken Movie and a 1-year subscription. Good Luck everyone! For your free ADV catalog (and this is one cool catalog) write to: AD Vision, 5750 Bliniff #217, Houston, TX 77036.

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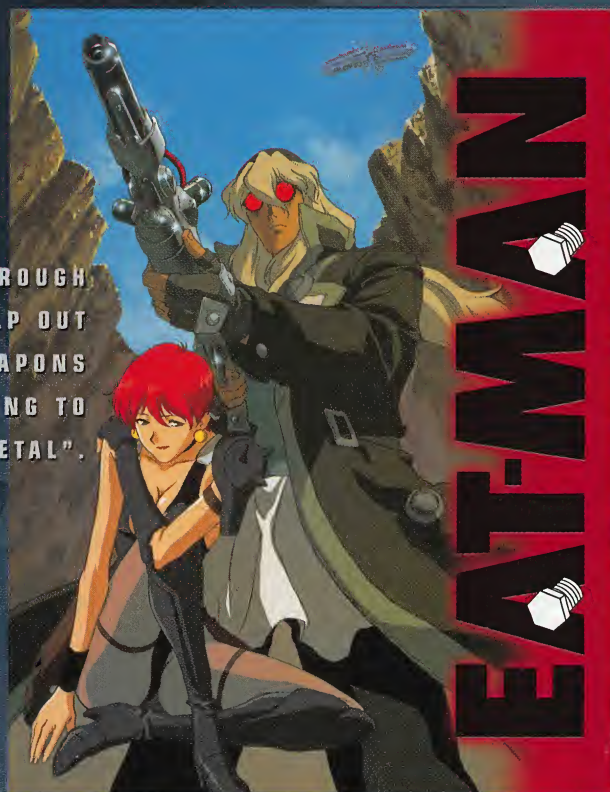
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GEX ACTION FIGURES



Resaurus are fast becoming a superpower in the action-figure arena. Their commitment to quality is in evidence once again with their amazing replication of the cast from *Gex: Deep Cover Gecko*. With these figures hitting stores this June for around \$9.99 each, just be glad they don't talk, if you know what I mean. Also pictured is the

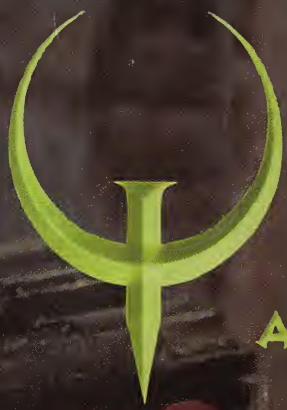
Goliath & Nadia set from the fledgling *Virus* movie (when did big budget sci-fi fall from grace?). This is one awesome-looking figure. He's like four times her size (these pictures aren't to scale), tipping the scales at around three pounds. He'll set you back about 25 bucks, but he talks: "You are Virus... I am aware." Creepy. Too bad he doesn't say, "Go see my movie."



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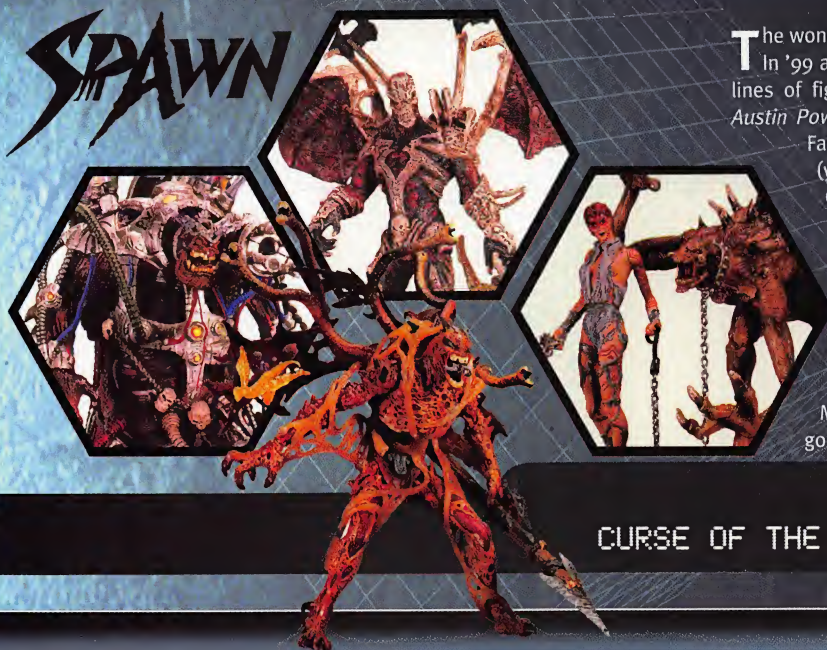


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SPAWN



The wonders of McFarlane never cease. In '99 alone, MT are promising 11 new lines of figures, including a shagadelic *Austin Powers* collection, *X-Files* TV, The Fab Four from *Yellow Submarine* (you got me), *Pumpkinhead*, *Ozzy* (yeah!), *The Crow*, *Chucky* and his *Bride*, and (can I get a drum-roll please...) **RAT FINK** Hot Rod Monsters! Pictured here are a few corpses from *Spawn* series 13, *Curse of the Spawn*. 1999 is going to be a banner year for McFarlane! After all, someone's gotta pay for that baseball...



CURSE OF THE SPAWN: SERIES 13

McFARLANE TOYS



NINTENDO FIGURES: TOY BIZ



Toy Biz better manufacture a ton of these. All of their upcoming Nintendo-based action figures look fantastic. The *Diddy Kong Racing* assortment seems so real that the photo almost looks like a rendered image. Along with *DKR* and *Mario Kart*, look for *Marvel vs. Capcom Series III*, *Resident Evil*, and an impressive line of *Darkstalkers vs.* fighting assortments. We'll have lots more on the Toy Biz '99 lineup in the next GRS.

WING COMMANDER: X TOYS

Available now, X-Toys' first video-game-related endeavor, *Wing Commander* figures (based on the zillion-selling PC and console games) are the first of what promise to be a great line of figures, given this company's impressive pedigree (having fled the solace of McFarlane Toys). Look for them wherever toys are sold for around \$5.99 each.



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From the company that helped fuel the current wave of video-game-related action figures, Playmates (remember *Earthworm Jim*?), comes these stunning *Turok* action sets. Excellent sculpting and paint work make these a must buy for fans of the game. Hey, in plastic, Turok even has feet...and a cool stand!

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Without the invoked images of the *Resident Evil 2* experience coiling through the atmospheric tracks, *Resident Evil 2 Original Soundtrack* would struggle to maintain its sweeping appeal. But linked to the extraordinary ambience of *RE*, many of the 31 tracks are surprisingly effective, opening our minds back to the first time we played the game. Most tracks are lifted directly from the original score, with the occasional embellishment and added texture. The album hits a high note with "Sherry's Theme," which casts a solemn coldness with its sluggish, extended chords opening against a heavy synth layer. This begins the darker stretch of the album as roiling orchestrations steadily build to a conclusion. From the very beginning, it was the musicians' intentions to give *Resident Evil 2* a more charged, modern-classical sound, and with the richly orchestrated earlier tracks, this has been full realized. "Raccoon City" employs the frenetic service of a meaty ensemble of percussion and brass, leaving the calm, sparse moments for tracks like "The Second Malformation of 'G,'" a beautiful piece that ends much too soon. It is a high point in an album that, left for the ears of the *RE* uninitiated, will affect to a lesser scale.



Kent Cencade

Resident Evil 2
Viz, Domestic**C-**

This isn't exactly a new release, but it is a very low-key release that requires serious mention. Mocean Worker (a.k.a. Adam Dorn) is a brilliant NYC Junglist, and *Home Movies From the Brainforest* is an essential purchase for all fans of intelligent jungle music. The first track, "What's Wrong," is a sign of what to expect across the entire CD: Furiously composed, powerful layered beats driving gorgeous synthesized anthems of modern jungle. When this formula breaks, as is the case with "Summertime/Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," we're exposed to stunning exploratory jazz rhythms simmering over graceful and provocative vocals. Tracks like "Somanyangles" glide across vast bursts of lush synth strings, somehow as effective and memorable as any vocal track, while rolling drums dance freely beneath. Perhaps the most important characteristic of MW's music on this CD is the incredible range of sound. After flowing through moderately aggressive, supremely addictive jungle styling, settling down for a gentle course through jazz-infused d&b excellence, we're allowed to pass into a darker realm for hostile, ripping basslines tempered by stunning atmosphere and composure. Hunt this one down.



Mike Griffin

Home Movies from the Brainforest
Mocean Worker
Conscience Records, Domestic**A**

Gamers' Re[public] Music Reviews

With *Pen Pen Tricelton*, General Entertainment have created the embodiment of "zany" and "whimsical" racing. Let's face it: Between the mad track owners, freaky character expressions and voices, and psychedelic track motifs, *Pen Pen* is a madman's creation. That's a good thing. To complete the lunacy, we have *Pen Pen*'s incredibly weird mutated big-band soundtrack. I think this type of music could only ever work with a game like *PPT*, and it just barely does that. Most importantly, the quality of the music itself is really pretty bad. The soundtrack production began in the summer of '98, and the game was a launch title in November '98, so go figure. Another issue is the fact that the sound team didn't really match the music to the gameplay. I'm sure that GE's game designs are going to improve over time, but I think they need new musicians...or maybe they should give the sound team a lot more time with a playable game. The only highlight on this disc is the funny character/announcer voices mixed into some of the tracks. I hate being so harsh, but I can't imagine where, when, or why you would sit down to listen to this CD!

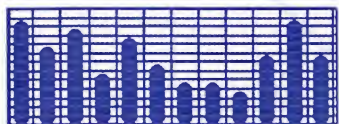


Mike Griffin

Pen Pen Tricelton
Original Game Soundtrack
Marvelous, Import**D+**

This follow up release from Moonshine's DJ Brian was a surprise find among the various releases from the local Los Angeles techno label. The album is a relentless mix of hard trance, laced with elements of tribal, progressive and break. Most notable is the engaging track from E. Razor, "India." Intertwining an intense tribal beat with a haunting sample of an asian-instrument loop, the track blends Western and Eastern sounds into a melodious excursion into the outer regions of the trance genre. DJ Brian successfully blends the track into a more energetic track from Sandra Collins (*Red*), and never lets up from that point on. This is the type of album which you have to invest the time to listen a few times (from track six on, the album is pure musical hypnosis), as the strength of DJ Brian's mix and selection become stronger and stronger with each additional listen. The tempo builds up to a pace and strength that often reminds me of British DJ duo, Sasha and Digweed. This, of course, is a high compliment, and I've become very fond of playing this album during the long hours at work here at the GR headquarters and during the drive home. Recommended.

Gregory Han

*Hardesertrance2*
Mixed by DJ Brian
Moonshine Music, Domestic**A-**

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

CIRRUS

As with most anything in U.S. pop culture, the electronic music scene has been highly publicized and subsequently blown apart for the masses. In fact, after a brief stint at the top (courtesy of funk soul brotha' FatBoy Slim) this wide-encompassing brand of music has returned to its club roots in grand fashion. Once again it's mainly those with an appreciation for the underground and disdain for the mainstream that have kept the scene alive. Luckily there are artists who refuse to back down in the face of such issues. Instead, they choose to reach out to the masses by combining their passion for the underground culture with a wide range of sound. One such group of artists may be the quickly rising Southern California trio Cirrus. We sat down with the young genre-busting, games-playing group recently for an interview.



GR: Let's start with the basics: Who are your greatest influences?

Cirrus: Oh wow...we listen to everything. Going back to Herbie Hancock, the old funk, to EPMD, Run DMC. We love classic rock like Zeppelin, Hendrix, stuff like that. Of course we like some of the newer stuff like Beastie Boys.

GR: Did you like Hello Nasty?

Cirrus: Umm...it got great critical acclaim, but I didn't like it anywhere near as much as Paul's Boutique. We're more influenced by Run DMC than BB anyway. We've into a lot of jazz, and lately we've been listening to the Kruder & Dorfmeister remixes. When we listen to stuff in our time off it's usually more laid back.

GR: What's the latest Cirrus project?

Cirrus: We're producing our third album. Actually, we're just barely getting started on that. We've already written a few tracks. We're also remixing and possibly producing some tracks for other acts, all the while touring as much as possible.

GR: We've heard that you have your own studio now...

Cirrus: Yeah, well, we always have had our own studio, but we've moved to a pretty giant location. We have a big warehouse now with a few offices, and we've converted one of these offices into a temporary studio. We're going to be constructing a nice control room too. It's all our own stuff; we like to be as independent as possible.

GR: Why did you decide to sign with Moonshine?

Cirrus: At the time they were the most reputable label on the west coast. They have the best distribution, a good name for quality, and we really like John and Steve [Moonshine owners].

GR: Do you do any promotional, non-traditional music gigs?

Cirrus: Actually, we're doing a show for a skateboarding/snowboarding clothing manufacturer. There's going to be Calvin Klein, Kickwear, all the good stuff. We like these gigs. The industry is full of a lot of cool people, young guys.

GR: Lucky for you. Do you come away from these events with a lot of free stuff?

Cirrus: Uh...yeah [laughs]. Not like that's the reason for doing it. It's always good, actually. It's a really fun crowd.

GR: So, how long have you been doing this and how long have you been published?

Cirrus: We started in 1995. We've only been signed with Moonshine for less than a year now, though. So we haven't really been doing this for long without sponsorship/signing.

GR: So that means that you had most of the material off Drop the Break before signing with them?

Cirrus: Yeah, you can kinda tell by listening. It's a real mix-match of styles and sounds and it wasn't really cohesive, although it allowed us to explore a



lot of different genres, and to kind of find our own sound.

GR: That's true. Drop the Break sounds like a DJ mix...

Cirrus: Aaron, the DJ, continues to DJ. After making the first album, which was mostly DJ-friendly material, we wanted to make something that you could listen to in your car or at home – not necessarily something like Drop the Break, which you could throw in at a club. When we listen to music we like to hear music that's not all instrumental and fast. We wanted stuff that we could listen to on the road...

GR: How involved were you with the Back to the Mission remix album?

Cirrus: We actually did one of the tracks on the vinyl for the remix. It's just a quick, fun track we fooled around with. It's almost got, like, a rock vibe to it. We knew that was going to be a DJ friendly track. Anyway, we really like DJ Dan and the stuff that he plays, so when he got more involved with Moonshine we thought, "What a perfect opportunity to do a remix". It's a good, long track that all the DJs, like Carl Cox, are playing right now.

GR: Should we expect to hear new instruments (thanks to the new studio) on the forthcoming album, sort of like the progression between Drop the Break and Back on a Mission?

Cirrus: It's not so much the gear that creates your sound. It's really how creative you can get with the equipment you have. We plan to use more organic instruments though. The sound is definitely harder on the new album, with more emphasis on song structure.

GR: Is it harder to tour Back on a Mission than Drop the Break?

Cirrus: It's easier to tour with BOAM in your average rock venue, but we like to play raves. If you try to play BOAM in a rave it's not going to go over. So what we did was remix some of the tracks for these types of shows, where fast beats belong. Last year we played over one hundred raves! We like rock shows but we prefer to stay in the underground.

GR: So we hear you're big gamers. What's your favorite game right now?

Cirrus: We love South Park on N64, 'cause we're fans of the show. Still, nothing beats Goldeneye or Starfox! Last year we contributed music to the PS game Apocalypse. We weren't really big PS fans before this, but Sony hooked us up with a system and we've been getting into it quite a bit. Tekken 3 is awesome. That is definitely our favorite PS game.

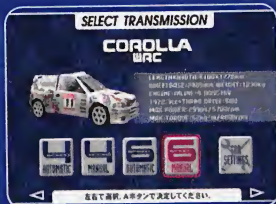
GR: Since you like games so much, would you like to do game music in the future?

Cirrus: Oh yeah, it's fun. We'd like to actually write music for a video game, as opposed to contributing music like with Apocalypse. We play games very naturally. It's just something to unwind with. People think that video games are such a waste of time. I wouldn't say that it's completely relaxing because it can get really intense sometimes, but it helps to completely clear your mind. We have focus when we come back to the studio.

Big thanks to Angel@Moonshine for the setup, and a huge thanks to the dudes at Cirrus for the cool chat. We have to play some '07 soon, guys...



Sega Rally 2



Sega Rally 2 has a whopping eleven new cars over the arcade's eight. To unlock these, you must play through the 10 Year Championship mode. Each time you place first on any year, a new car is opened up. An eleventh car, the Renault Maxi Megane, is available once you finish in at least seventh in Arcade mode on Easy. In the Rally 2 manual, a total of 20 cars are shown, though only nineteen can be seen on the car select screen. For whatever reason, the twentieth car listed is simply the alternate color version of the Toyota Corolla WRC.

ALTERNATE CAR COLORS

Some cars have alternate paint schemes. Simply hold the L trigger as you select your machine.

SECRET RALLY TRACK

To open the diabolical Super S.S. course, place first on every year of the 10 Year Championship. Upon the completion of the final leg of the 10th year, you'll race against a Lancia 037. Beat it and you gain access to this killer machine.

MOVE RACE TIMER

Hold Y and press start on the track select screen to move the race timer to the lower right corner of the screen. It's been reported that this code also reduces the amount of detail in the courses (presumably to smooth out the frame rate) though we found no evidence of this.



The Coolest Codes of the Month award has to go to Blast Radius with its wacky set of cheats.

BONUS LEVELS

Press L1, Left, L2, Down, Select, Left, Down, R2x3, Select, Up at the main menu. You'll hear an explosion confirming correct code entry. Four bonus missions that feature World War I biplanes and zeppelins will be accessible. This code will not work with the "Powered up ships" or "Wraith ship" code.

ALTERNATE BACKGROUND IMAGES

Press Down, Up, L1, Right, L1, Up, Right, Select, Right, R2, L1, L2 at the main menu. You'll hear an explosion confirming correct code entry. Members of the development team will appear in place of the planets in the first four levels. This code will not work with the "Powered up ships" or "Wraith ship" code.

POWERED UP SHIPS

Press Right, L1, Upx2, Down, Right, R2, L2, R2, Down, Up, Down at the main menu. You'll hear an explosion confirming correct code entry. Select any ship, begin game play, then quit. All four ships will now be powered-up and Sector 5 will be available.

WRAITH SHIP

Enable the "Powered up ships" code. Then press Left, Right, L1, Left, Right, L1, R2, R2, L2, Left, Right, Up at the main menu. You'll hear an explosion confirming correct code entry. Again, select any ship, begin game play, then quit. The Wraith ship and Sector 8 will be available.



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After completing the first level of T'ai Fu, press R1 + R2 on the map screen. This should bring up a debug menu allowing you to access any part of the map. It should be noted that this code worked on a final reviewable copy of the game, and not an actual production copy.

**Mario Party****ALTERNATE COSTUMES**

To access the alternate character costumes, simply hold up on the D-pad as you select your character in arcade mode.

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Beat arcade mode as Tifa.

FIGHT AS YUFFIE KISARAGI

Beat arcade mode as Cloud.

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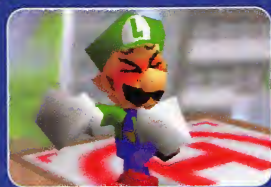
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Complete the game with any character on Normal difficulty. Challenge and defeat Purin in order to unlock her.

UNLOCK LUIGI
Complete Bonus Practice 1 with all 8 characters. Challenge and defeat Luigi in order to unlock him.

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Complete the game on Normal without using any continues. Challenge and defeat Ness in order to unlock him.

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TERMINATOR 2 3-D

Universal Studios, Los Angeles

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Live action • May 6

On May 6, 1999, Universal Studios Hollywood will hold the L.A. grand opening of James Cameron's *Terminator 2 3-D* film-based theme park attraction. The event will coincide with Universal Studio's 36th anniversary and will no doubt be a day to remember for a long time to come.

Cameron's previous achievements include *Terminator 1 & 2* and the Oscar-winning *Titanic*, so it should come as no surprise to learn that the 12-minute extravaganza cost millions of dollars to produce and is, frame for frame, the most expensive live-action movie ever produced. The storyline continues where *Terminator 2* left off. The film sees John Conner and the Terminator sent from present day across time to the year 2029, where the city

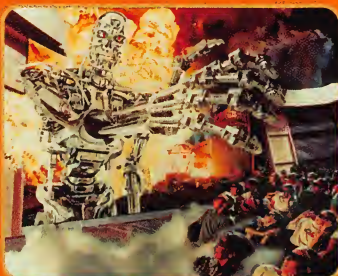
of Los Angeles is under the ruthless control of the computer-controlled Skynet Corp.

In order to save mankind from certain destruction, the duo must destroy Skynet's doomsday complex and its huge army of deadly machines, including the newly created T-1,000,000. The visual ride can seat 700 people at once, and the film is projected

onto three massive 23'x50' screens (which span 165 feet). Live actors also participate in the action and in one key sequence, a 1,500 pound Harley Davidson motorcycle explodes off the screen and launches towards the theater stage. This all sounds rather exciting!

"T2 3-D was especially exciting because it's a blend of the film that I know, taken to a new extreme, the high-resolution 65mm format, mixed with the illusion of depth offered by 3-D," says Cameron. "Objects on the screen become indistinguishable from the live actors and special effects in the foreground, creating one amazing reality."

The original cast of the *Terminator 2* movie are present, including Linda Hamilton, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Edward Furlong and Robert Patrick. All in all, considering the event can roughly plough through around 2100 people per hour, Universal Studios look set to enjoy enormous success with the T2 3-D ride. You could say that people will be back for more. Come on... Ah'll be back? Duh!



MATRIX

WARNER BROS.

Keanu Reeves steps up as the leading man again, this time in a futuristic movie where technology has clouded people's minds, and he's the only one who can save them. Wait...did I say *this* time or *last* time? Sure, at first glance this sounds like another stinker. But after seeing the trailer, both at the theater and on the www.whatisthematrix.com official website, I think that this might be a worthwhile flick after all. It turns out that computers have taken over our minds, and control what we perceive as reality in order to quietly cash in on our "life force" and take over the world. O.K., it's still flimsy. Well, it does co-star Laurence Fishburne and Carrie Ann Moss (pictured with Keanu above) as rebels helping him combat the evil menace, and the special effects look over-the-top, melt-your-brain fantastic. I'm guessing those alone will be worth the price of admission, and if it's a well-written story as well, that's just a bonus.

Not Yet Rated - In theaters April 2



THE RUGRATS MOVIE

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

If you've been under a rock, or at least just far, far away from children the last few years, then you don't know how popular Nickelodeon's *Rugrats* cartoon is, nor that the motion picture that hit the big screen last year pulled in over \$90 million at the box office. To bring you up to speed: the Nick show deals with a group of toddlers and their unique perspective on life, being only a couple of feet off the ground. In the movie, one of the main characters learns he's getting a baby brother, and decides to take him back to the "hop-sickle." He recruits the other kidlets to help him, and hilarious hijinks ensue. And as a bonus, the video release includes the debut episode of the new cartoon show *CatDog*, about...well, a cat with a dog on its butt. Or vice versa. Whatever. The kids'll love it.

Rated G - On Video March 30



THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR:

Wow, where to start? Well, breaking news is that Todd McFarlane Entertainment is slotted to supervise the scripting and character design of a feature-film adaptation of *DOOM*. I wonder if the toy deal is part of the package? • The official release date for the *Wing Commander* feature film is March 12, and we can't be the only ones to guess that the new *Star Wars* trailer will open the onscreen festivities... • Much to our publisher's delight, Kids WB! has ordered up a second season of *Batman Beyond*, as well as additional episodes of *Pokémon* to prepare them for running that show six days a week coming this fall. • Variety reports that 20th Century Fox has extended its deal with Marvel for the film rights to the *Fantastic Four*, *X-Men*, and *Silver Surfer*. Many additional reports purport when any of these films might be made and released: we at GR aren't holding our breath, but we hope that it works out eventually into at least one decent movie. Please? • Three words: *Dungeons & Dragons* movie! Well, three words and a symbol... Apparently Courtney Solomon, president of Sweetpea Entertainment, will make his directorial debut with this movie. We're there, as soon as we save our place in *Baldur's Gate*... • Word has it Jackie Chan is working on a new movie called *Nosebleed*, in which he's a window washer on the World Trade Center and tries to foil what he believes is an impending terrorist attack on his place of employment. I assume he's still doing his own stunts, and that one of them won't involve jumping from the roof... • And, finally, I know it has nothing to do directly with movies, but Playmates Toys is releasing a line of 9" *Tomb Raider* toys, as well as a 12" talking Lara Croft doll with rooted hair and realistic skin. Just what we need around here...

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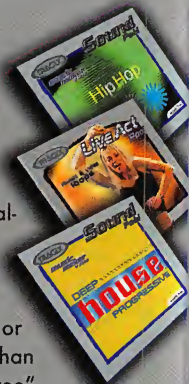
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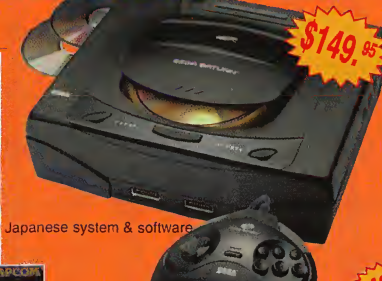
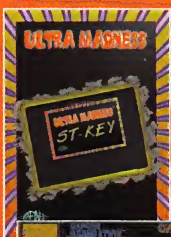


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FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:

Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 218,
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Greetings and salutations, Millennium brethren,

I'd like to first congratulate you guys on a successful opening year between the Republic and Millennium Books. You guys made the transition to mature publication easily without losing any of the trademark humor we've all come to love. A couple of quick remarks.

1) While I'm very sad to see some of my old favorites go (Ryan L. and Dave Hodgson), I'm sure they won't have any trouble finding jobs in an industry desperately in need of more quality journalists. Good luck to them in whatever they pursue.

2) On that note, does a return to a console focus mean GR will still be keeping its Anime Republic, Music, and Movies sections?

3) (A quick rant) Working at a major software/console retail chain part-time for the last couple of years, I've come to realize that about 80% of the people who walk into a store will believe anything a magazine, web site, or editorial tells them. I can't even count the number of people who've looked at the Dreamcast we have up on demo (regardless of what game is up on screen) and scoffed, saying things like "Gran Turismo looks much better" (in comparison to Rally 2) or "This looks exactly like the old Sonics" in reference to SA. Has the whole world gone crazy? (More of a rhetorical question than anything else.) If people would remove the cataract of system bias from their eyes, they'll realize that every single system on the market has its ups and downs, their Zeldas and their Fantastic Fours, and each one is worth purchasing for a different reason. So, to the idiots out there who insist on scoffing at ANY system for some perceived lacking, KISS MY \$%&. And to all the hardcore gamers out there who have kept the faith, read their Republics, and watched their Evil Deads, my respect and my congrats go out to you. ←steps off soapbox→

4) Last, but not least, my thanks for calling crap by its proper name. Far too many mags out there hype up every piece of filth for nine months, only to give it the proper D/C ratings it deserves when it finally ships. On more than one occasion, GR has stepped in to say "This game needs work... badly." Thank you for separating the preview section from the marketing section. Keep up the good work, gentlemen.

Dark Schneider

Dear Dark,

First of all, thank you for the salutations. In answer to your question, yes, we will continue to cover anime, music, and cinema (although you'll likely never see a review of, like, Step Mom) in GR. We'll cover PC too, but just the h-core stuff. Based on our most recent (and extremely cool) reader survey (thanks to everyone that participated) 68% of those polled watch anime, and 73% would purchase game soundtracks! So it seems that we are really hitting home with the gamers we have the most in common with. Maybe someday we'll all hang out! It was sad to see some close friends move on, but they're still friends. The game industry is like that. As glamorous as it sounds, it's a

stressful business and frequently people move around – although that was a lot at once. Ed's farts sure can clear a room. As for the hardware goons you speak of, well, there's always one in a crowd. What's important is that right now, there's a wide range of consoles to choose from at consistently low prices. Besides the obvious choices, you can buy a used Neo Geo, SNES, or Genesis and still have a great time. There's literally something for everybody currently, although the absence of any new Saturn software still bums me out. Sega should have kept a steady flow of import translations coming until the Dreamcast shipped over here. U.S. gamers missed out on soooo many great titles. It's really a shame. Anyone who looks at Rally 2, though, and compares it to Gran Turismo graphically is smokin' paint. And what 3D Sonic ever came out that looks like Sonic Adventure. What a bone head! Where do you work? Wherever it is, I hope you display GR prominently at the counter! And finally, we will always call crap by its real name. All the hype in the world can't make a bad game good. Thanks for the cool email.

Hello GR,

Having just bought my first copy of GR I thought I would write and tell you how impressed I am. Here in England we are inundated with publications aimed at the younger games players. There are exceptions, but not many magazines such as GR give us mature gamers the information we need, without resorting to useless freebies or attention-grabbing covers.

There has been a huge shift in the target audience, which unfortunately hasn't been picked up by some magazines. If we look at PC magazines however, the opposite has happened. Gone are the jargon-filled, sleep-inducing magazines of the early '80s. Now people have begun to realize that the gap between computer and console is shrinking fast. The Sega Dreamcast will be Internet compatible, a very exciting thought, as competitors – i.e., Sony – will have no choice but to introduce this into future projects or be left behind. The idea of a reasonably priced Internet compatible machine is refreshing to those of us unable to afford a high-end P.C.

Some People have projected that the launch of Sega's new flagship will have a drastic effect on PC sales. It is believed that the people who buy PCs for games (in England there are a LOT of them!) will choose the cheaper, dare I say more powerful console. It will be interesting to see how the market will react to this newcomer, will Dreamcast/P.C. compatibility be the next big thing? I'm sure your excellent publication will keep us well and truly informed.

Best regards,
Paul Little
Liverpool, England

Dear Paul,

Me and you are on the same page. I can't see why anyone would buy a PC specifically to play games once the Dreamcast (and soon the new PlayStation) hit. For one thing, we know for sure

that third parties with hot PC titles will immediately port, port, port. The likes of Half Life and Quake 3 on a home console that's internet-ready for around \$200.00? Ka-ching for Sega, provided the U.S. DC ships with a 56k modem. There are rumors that the modem could be sold separately, but still, you're looking at the same level of online gaming (or better) that high dollar PCs provide for a fraction of the price. Of course, PC gaming will get better too, as new accelerators are introduced, and hard-core PC gamers will always prefer the overall PC experience. It's reaching a level, though, where you gotta ask yourself, how much better can the visual side of gaming get? When games start to look like A Bug's Life, hardware for 3D video game development will have reached its full potential. I want to know where we go from there! I'm thinkin' total sensory immersive game play. Imagine a hot date with Lara Croft sans the seams...

Greetings from Hawaii!



NINTENDO 64

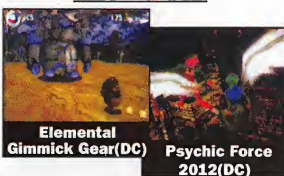


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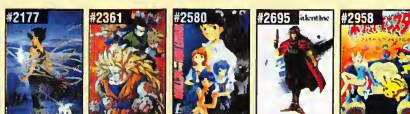
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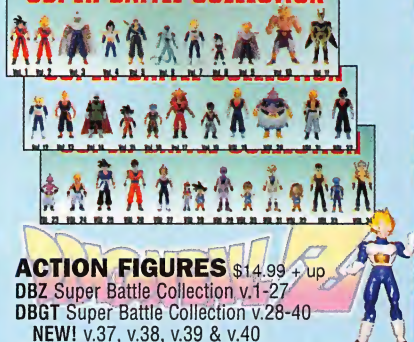


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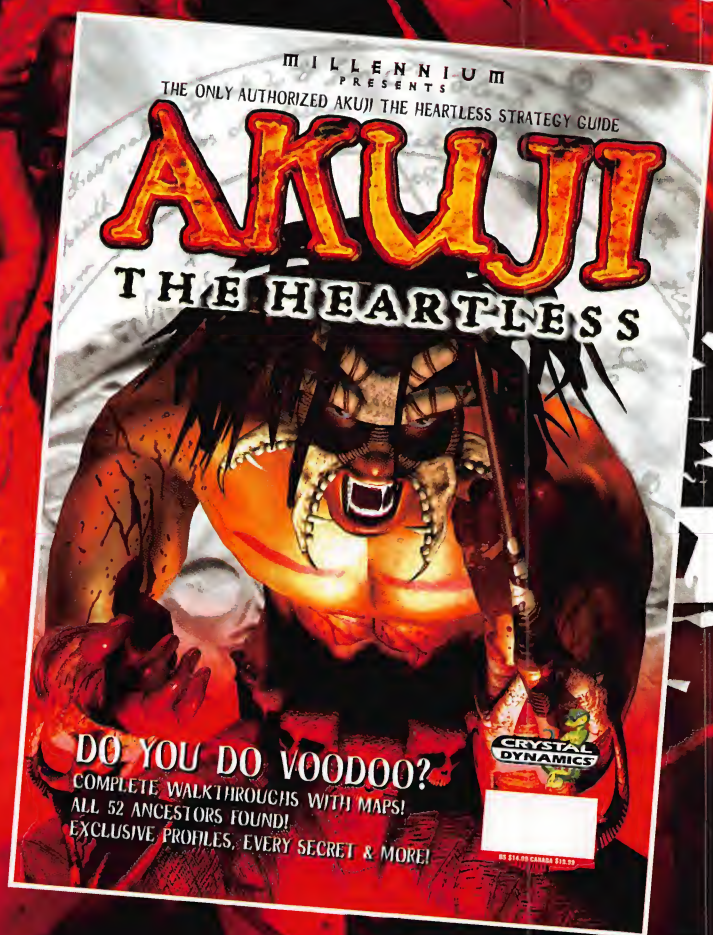
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THUNDER FORCE V

stage six

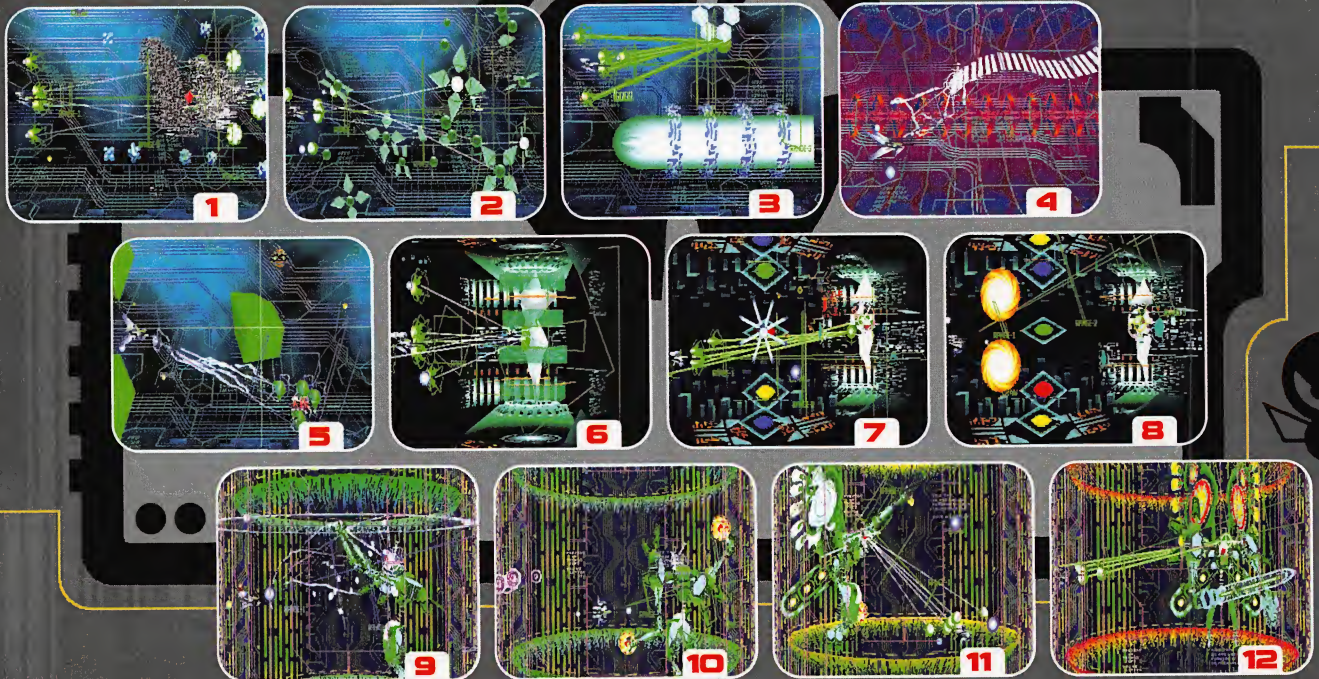
FROM THE BOTTOM OF ONE'S HEART

The giant battleship Judgement Sword and the interior of the Guardian, the autonomous artificial intelligence.

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Hopefully you still have the Free Range from the previous level. After a selection of simple starter targets, your first Danger warning appears, this one from the rear. It's just some blue crystalline blobs, which are easily dispatched, followed by a huge cluster of them from the front (01). Next up are the fans, and if you don't already have the Free Range, you can get one here. Quickly grab it and blast the rotating green fans (02). After this, you'll see the background shift patterns and a cube snake will present itself. Target that thing with Free Range and fire. Next up is a pyramid snake. Maneuver around it to get in front and blast away. Finally, a purple diamond snake flies in. Repeat process. Next up, a formation of red rings will fly in. They pose little threat until they line up, turn blue, and fire a large laser blast (03). They'll do this two or three times and then fly off. Next, stay low and target the small laser firing triangles. The background will shift patterns again and a ribbon will fly in from the top right. Stay low and left and blast it with an over-charged Free Range (04) and it should dissipate before becoming a real threat. Some menial foes come up next, followed by several green crystals.

These are followed by bigger ones that must be destroyed (05). Now comes the boss, a matronly figure surrounded by four circular shields. Sit roughly in the open spots between the shields to avoid the initial laser blasts (06). Once the shields are down, the real fun begins. Rotating diamonds come in and unleash several different attacks. They'll either be lasers (07) just sit below and to the left of the center diamond to avoid this) or two large fireballs. Fly between them or under them, and this form of the boss should expire in short order (08). Now the real, real fun begins. Once this form is destroyed, the true final boss appears, a green mech with multiple deadly forms. Just watch him to figure out his patterns. When he holds his hands up high, get ready for a cascade of blue bullets (09). When you see little swirling animations around his shoulders, he's preparing to fire several blue blasts. If he rears back, he's about to lob a handful of death your way (10). As you damage him, he'll cocoon for quick beat and emerge sprouting butterfly-like wings and harder attacks (11, 12). You've got to be expedient in his destruction or he'll fly away and you get the bad ending. That's it, you've done it.



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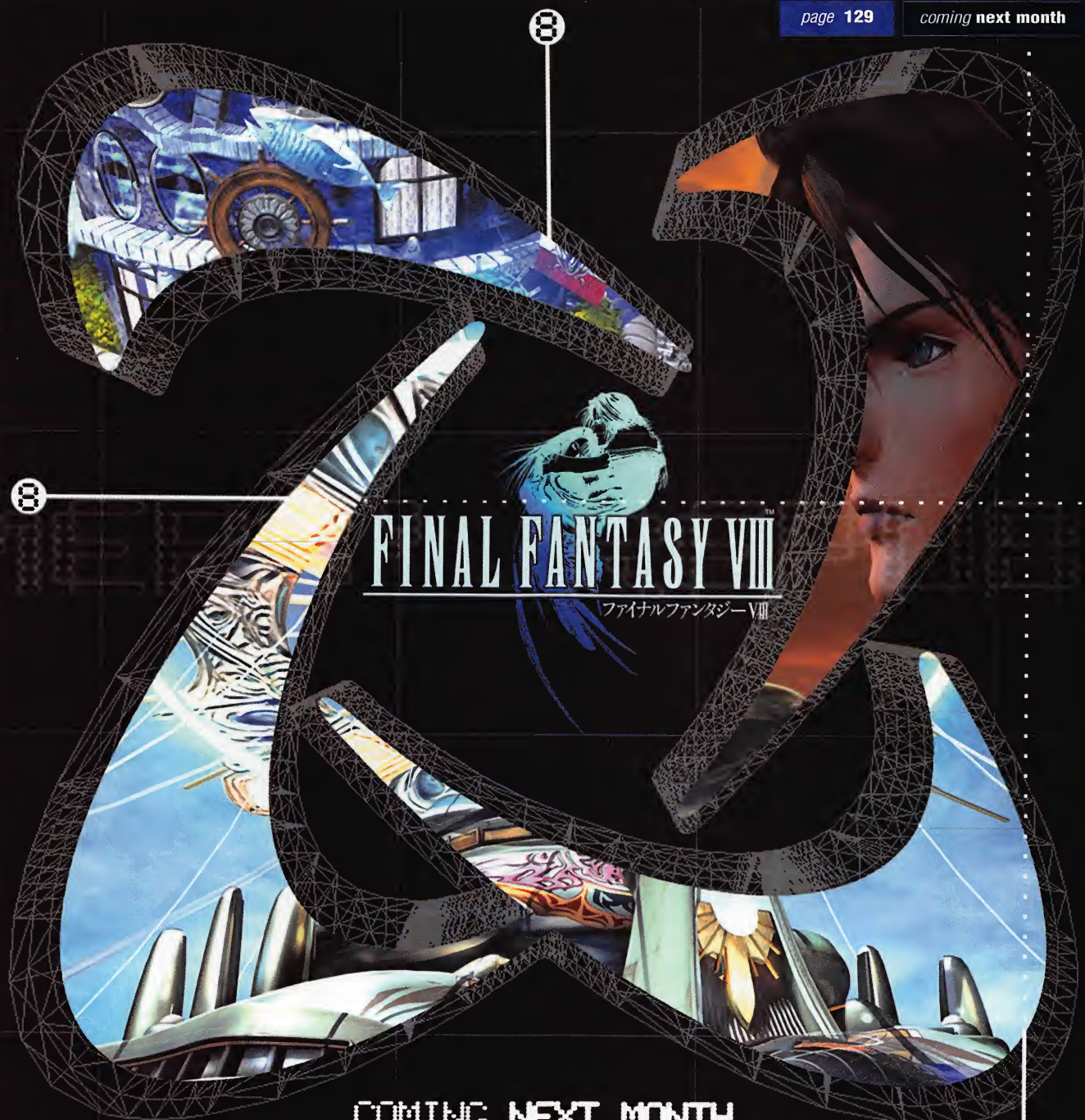


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ISSUE

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The insidious anticipation surrounding *Final Fantasy VIII* has finally been put to rest for Japanese gamers. Was it worth the wait? We'll offer our version of the answer, along with a look at the hype surrounding the game's day of release, next month. What *Final Fantasy* has meant to Japanese console gamers, *Quake* has meant to American PC gamers – namely, those who live for online confrontation. With the release of *Quake III* edging closer, we'll explore what this newest version has to offer to its already-stalwart FPS formula. Sequels are indeed the popular course of action today, so why not reach back – way back – and cultivate the *Gauntlet* classic for the N64 audience? Midway thought this only logical; we'll let you know just how logical with a hands-on report. In keeping with the retro theme, we'll also dip into the past ourselves and stir your nostalgia with a newly added retro section. Expect this plus a generous plate of surprises in the May issue of Gamers' Republic.



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